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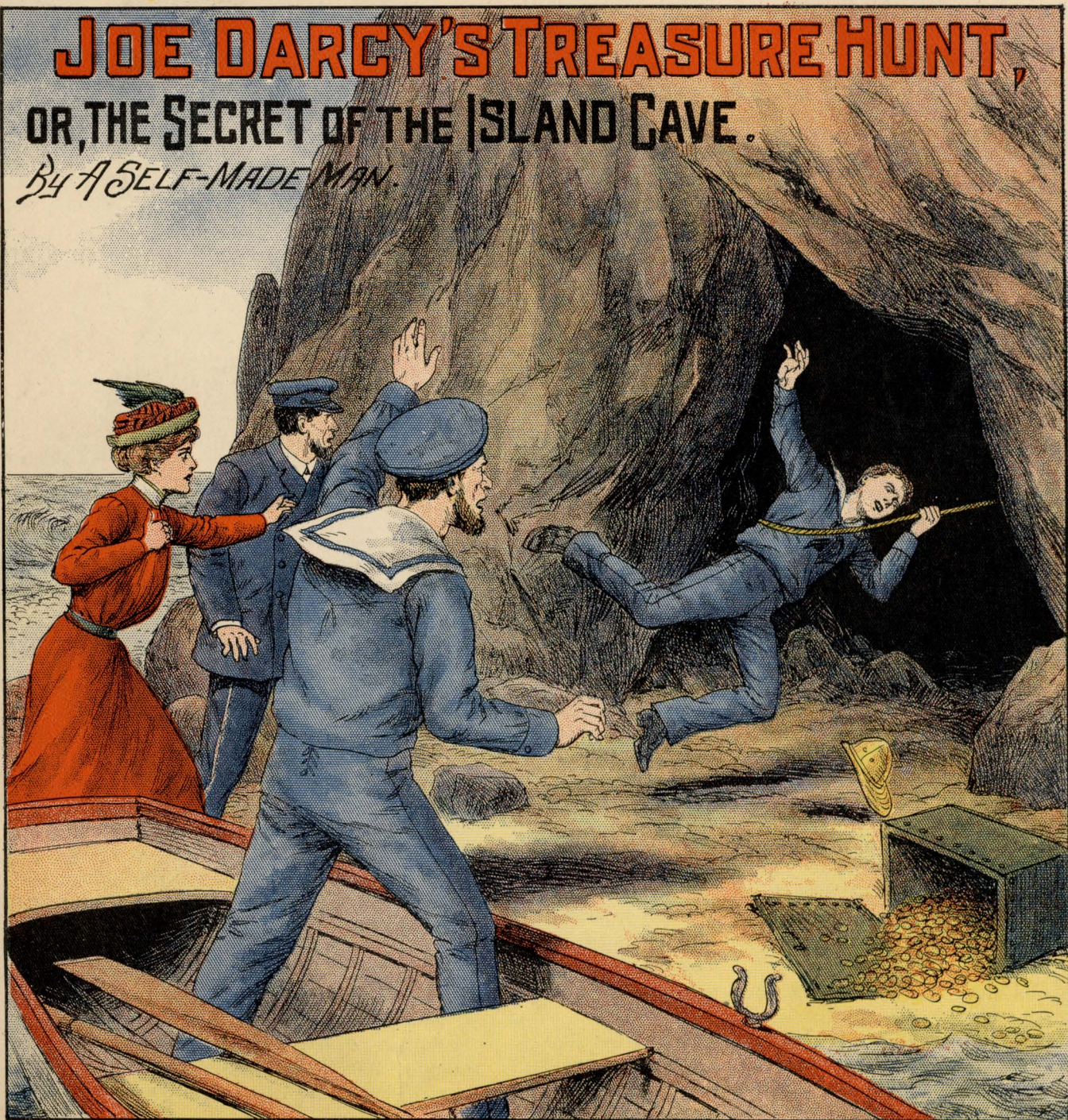
• AND •

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

JOE DARCY'S TREASURE HUNT, OR, THE SECRET OF THE ISLAND CAVE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



While Joe stood looking at the overturned box of gold coins, a lasso flew out of the cave, and the noose tightened around his body. The next instant he was dragged into the dark opening. His friends uttered cries of alarm.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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NEW YORK, JULY 22, 1910.

PRICE 5 CENTS.

Joe Darcy's Treasure Hunt

OR,

The Secret of the Island Cave

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

THE DERELICT.

"Well, if that isn't the queerest hooker I ever saw I don't know what I'm talking about," said Joe Darcy to himself as he sat fishing from a rock at the foot of a sweeping promontory that jugged into the Pacific Ocean, and squinted his eyes toward a mastless hulk that was being towed into the busy little port of Santa Catalina, California.

"It was a queer boat, as the boy remarked, of foreign build, and so storm-tossed and weather-beaten that she hardly looked worth the trouble of saving.

However, the skipper of the big bark that was towing her in must have thought differently, or he wouldn't have picked her up.

Outlandish as was the derelict, it had a substantial value, for its bottom was copper-sheathed heavily, and its timbers and planks solidly braced and bolted.

Joe was pretty well acquainted with all the various craft that sailed to and from Catalina, and he recognized the big bark as the *Star of Hope*, Captain Beardsley, owned by Tupper & Co., whose warehouse was close to the water front, and not far from the little marine junk shop of which Joe's uncle, Phelim Darcy, was the proprietor.

Mr. Darcy's shop had more than a local reputation.

It was known from one end of the Pacific Coast to the other.

And its reputation was not merely that of a common junk shop, but a repository of numberless rare and curious

articles wrought in metal, blown in glass, and carved in wood.

Around the entrance were coiled many yards of yellow, rusty and long-disused chains, an anchor or two, with their flukes upturned like the tails of diving sea monsters; old galley stoves covered with tarnished pieces of sailcloth; piles of iron belaying pins, rusty, bust as good as ever, as well as a score or two of other marine articles impervious to the weather.

Two windows filled with tropical shells, stuffed birds, small, offensive weapons from the South Sea Islands, and other curiosities too numerous to mention, faced the water front and the bay beyond.

To describe the interior of the shop would be quite impossible, for surely such a collection was never before gathered under one roof.

It was scattered over the floors, piled in the corners, and upon shelves that rose from the floor of the ceiling—everything apparently in the greatest confusion, and yet quite orderly to the eye of the proprietor, and to Joe himself, both of whom could pick out at a moment's notice any article in the place.

Phelim Darcy's private office was a little museum, and in it, on top of the old-fashioned safe, and overlooking the desk, was a certain bird's-eye maple cabinet, with a silent-sliding door, which contained articles that had, in Mr. Darcy's opinion, prospective and contingent values.

The junk dealer bought all the waste paper he could get hold of—not only old newspaper, but every kind of paper offered to him.

It was a part of Joe's duty to sort this stuff out and bundle it up for transportation to San Francisco.

Acting under instructions from his uncle, it was his practice to rescue from the general mass whole and fragmentary documents of every description, such as receipts, memoranda, contracts, cashed checks, outlawed notes, and particularly letters, all of which he laid on Phelim Darcy's desk for that individual's close inspection.

Much of this stuff, carefully indexed, found a resting place in the little cabinet, and only the junk dealer knew why it went to roost there.

When not particularly busy, Joe himself took the liberty of inspecting many of these articles himself as he picked them out.

One day he found a letter the contents of which interested him greatly.

Instead of turning it over to his uncle, he put it into his pocket, and subsequently locked it up in his own trunk in his attic room.

Time and again he took it out and reread it with an eager avidity that indicated the interest he took in it.

Then he would sit and gaze out through his open window at the rolling Pacific with a wistful expression on his bright and manly countenance, as if his mind conjured up a picture in the distance that was not visible to his eyes.

Joe never told his uncle about that letter, nor what was in it.

It was the only secret he ever had, but to him it was a momentous one.

It followed him into his dreams where he saw a verdure-clad island of no great size shimmering in a sparkling tropical sea, with nothing else in sight but the boundless horizon.

The island was as real to him as the miscellaneous contents of the shop, but its latitude and longitude were as a sealed book.

Somewhere out in the vast Pacific Ocean he was sure that island existed, but where?—that was the rub.

Ah, if he only knew!

He was thinking about that island when the big brig, with the derelict in tow, showed her nose around the point of the promontory, and steered in for the town.

The odd spectacle drove the island from his mind for the time being, and he fell to speculating as to where the skipper of the "Star of Hope" had picked her up.

Joe was as curious as the average boy.

Here appeared to be one of those mysteries of the sea he had often read about and heard sailors speak of.

She was too far off for Joe to make out with his naked eye whether there was anybody aboard of her; he therefore conjectured that she had been abandoned by her officers and crew under the impression, probably, that she was about to founder.

Yet that supposition did not appear to hold good, since the derelict stood well out of the water, an indication that her hull was staunch and sound.

Joe argued, with common sense, that no matter how badly battered a vessel might be in her upper works from a storm, or succession of heavy gales, skipper and crew were not likely to leave her for the uncertainty of crowded boats and the continued hardships thereof, if her hull was sound.

No, the ship's company must be on board at that moment, or some other reason must be found to account for their disappearance.

"If they're aboard," thought Joe, forgetful of a fish that was wriggling on one of his hooks just then, "they are probably nigh starved, for that craft looks as if it has been knocking about the sea for months at the mercy of the elements. Why, the iron work is red with rust. I can make that much out from here."

At that moment the struggling fish gave such a tug at the line that Joe's attention was attracted to it, and he proceeded to yank it out of its natural element, and land it in a little pool behind him where several other fish were swimming around in circles seeking for some avenue of escape.

"I guess I won't fish any more," he said, after counting those he had captured. "It won't be long before half the male population of Santa Catalina will be down on the wharves trying to make out what Captain Beardsley has brought into port with a tow-line. The curiosity of some people would knock you silly. I can't afford to let the mob get in ahead of me, seeing that I saw the wreck first. I'm interested in her, and I'm going to take a boat and go off and get a closer view."

With that purpose in view, Joe wound up his line, strung his fish together, and started for the town.

He hustled along, for he had some distance to go, and the path was by no means direct.

When he finally reached the water front, he saw many idlers congregated on the wharves, some with telescopes, looking off toward the incoming "Star of Hope."

The arrival of any vessel of size always attracted the attention of those who had nothing better to do than to kill time.

He hurried to the shop and ran up a rickety pair of stairs to the second floor, where the housekeeper was employed with preparations for supper.

"Here's a mess of fish for you, Bridget," said Joe, tossing his catch on the kitchen table.

"Sure that isn't half a mess, Joe," replied the woman. "Didn't the fish bite to-day?"

"Oh, I guess it'll do for one meal. Maybe I'll get some more to-morrow," answered the boy, turning away and getting downstairs as soon as he could.

His uncle was making a sale in the store.

Joe waited till the customer went away.

"Say, uncle, the Star of Hope is coming into the harbor," he said.

Mr. Darcy was not particularly interested in the big brig, and merely nodded as he walked toward his office.

The crew, doubtless, would have curiosities to sell him, for it was a common practice with sailors who went to foreign parts from Santa Catalina to pick up what they could that struck them as odd and unusual for the purpose of making extra money on their return, as they knew the junk dealer was a ready purchaser, though generally at his own price.

"She's towing in a derelict," continued Joe.

The word "derelict" acted like magic on Phelim Darcy.

The vision of an auction sale rose before his mind's eye, and the chances were he would be able to buy it at a figure

that would give him a considerable profit when it was broken up and sold piecemeal.

He had orders now for old copper, and ship timbers, as well as second-hand rope, which he could not fill owing to a dearth in his shop of those articles.

"A derelict, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Darcy, stopping short and eyeing his nephew with interest.

"Yes, and she's a peach of a one," said Joe. "The worst you ever saw in your life. Been knocking around the lord knows how long."

The junk dealer's face fell.

That didn't promise well for the stuff it would turn out.

He wasn't looking for rotten timbers, and decayed rope, and metal with the life eaten out of it through corrosion.

There was no market for such stuff, and Mr. Darcy never burnt his fingers with it.

"So it's a rotten hull? How do you know? You haven't been close to it, have you? I thought you went fishing," he said.

"So I did go fishing. I've just got back. But I saw the brig and the derelict when they came around the Point. I had a good view of both, though not a close one. I don't think the wreck is rotten. Cap'n Beardsley couldn't have towed her in if she was. She stands well up, which shows she hasn't any water to speak of inside of her. If she did have any it has been pumped out. Her masts are all gone. The three stumps only remain."

"Then she's the wreck of a ship?"

"I don't think so. Too small. Must be a barque. There's good stuff in her for you to bid on when the time comes, but for all that she's a curiosity for fair as she stands now. I'm going to take a boat and go off to her."

"That's right. Get aboard and look her over as well as you can, and when you get back you can tell me how she sizes up. Take particular notice of her timbers, and whatever rope she's got left. Get into the lazarette, if you can, and see what's there in the way of rope and spare sail. Understand?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Then be off."

Joe needed no second bidding.

He started like a shot for the wharf in front of the warehouse of Tupper & Co.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGERS FROM NOWHERE.

As Joe crossed the roadway, Mr. Tupper came out of the warehouse and walked down to the wharf.

He was a portly, well-fed gentleman, and was looked upon as the nabob of Santa Catalina.

The wharf was vacant save for a small coasting sloop that was moored on one side and had just finished discharging her cargo of flour.

Joe looked for one of the boatmen that hung out there, but not one was in sight.

The bunch had gone down the bay to meet the brig and her tow.

At the end of the wharf stood a gentleman who was in the ship chandlery business.

He had a spy-glass in his hands and was surveying the brig and the derelict through it.

Joe stood by on the chance that the gentleman would let him have a peep, too.

"Well, Mr. Brown, what do you make of that wreck the Star of Hope has just brought in?" asked Mr. Tupper, coming up.

"Not much, Mr. Tupper," replied the ship chandler. "She's nothing but a hulk—all her masts gone by the board, and only a section of the bowsprit left. What I can't understand is the character of her crew."

"Then there's people aboard of her?" said the ship owner.

"Yes. Quite a number, and all apparently black."

"Black!"

"That's what they appear through the glass. Take a look for yourself," and Mr. Brown handed the glass to the brig owner.

Joe listened to their conversation with great interest.

He was surprised to hear that the derelict was manned by black men.

Mr. Tupper, whose eyesight seemed to be better than the ship chandler's, said that the men were not negroes, but were certainly much darker skinned than any of the natives of the Pacific islands.

"The wreck is a European-built craft, and I judge that she has come from the far East," he said. "Got blown out of her latitude, dismasted, and then floated about till she finally got into the track of the 'Star of Hope.' Well, we shall have the particulars presently, for the brig is about to drop her anchor, and then Cap'n Beardsley will come ashore at once to report to me."

The Star of Hope let go her red-painted anchor with a tremendous splash, and then, with a swirl and gurgle, it vanished into the dark green water.

Some of her upper sails had already been taken in, and now Joe could see her crew busy furling her lower ones.

By this time there were a dozen or more persons at the end of the wharf, all of them speculating upon the character of the derelict.

A boat was dropped from the starboard davits of the brig, and soon headed for the wharf where Joe and the others stood.

In the stern sat Captain Beardsley, and he was coming ashore to report his arrival and make his explanation concerning the wreck.

The boat dashed up to the landing stairs and the skipper was presently shaking hands with Mr. Tupper and the ship chandler.

"Well, Mr. Tupper, I'm a couple of days behind my time, but that is due to the derelict I picked up in mid-Pacific," said Captain Beardsley, in foghorn tones.

"What wreck have you in charge, cap'n?" asked the owner.

"Don't know, sir."

"Don't know? Isn't her name——"

"Her name has been scraped from the stern, and is also missing from the bows."

"That's singular, isn't it?"

"Very."

"And her log book and other papers?"

"Gone. Not a book, paper, chart or instrument aboard."

"Your words would indicate that officers and crew are gone, too; but who are those dark-skinned individuals I saw aboard of her through the glass?"

"Don't know that, either."

"Is their lingo so unintelligible that you can't get any information out of them?"

"Yes, sir. They're the worst jabberers I ever heard, and yet not a word of their talk can any of us understand. I thought I'd seen a sample of about every race under the sun, but I confess those chaps are new to me. I can't make out to save me where they came from, and certainly their presence aboard the derelict is a mystery. One can see with half an eye that they know nothing about seamanship. I suspect that they were carried off from their native place by accident, and yet how such a thing could happen gets me. The wreck has every appearance of having been looted. That would give one the idea that officers and crew had been done away with."

"When did you pick the wreck up?" asked Mr. Tupper.

"On the 23d of last month, right after the equinox, in latitude——"

"Never mind the latitude and longitude now, cap'n, you can put in your written report, but give me a description of the derelict."

"When we found her the masts and what was left of her top-hamper, were hanging over her smashed port bulwarks or floating alongside. We had to cut the wreckage away to right her. We found some twenty dark-skinned fellows aboard whose identity we couldn't fathom from their guttural, explosive language. They were half-stared. Whatever eatables they had had aboard they had cleaned up before we met them. The like of their jargon was never heard before. When one talks the whole of them jabber away at the same time. Then they all stop at once, like a clock run down. I'll say one thing for them, though they're a pretty ugly looking lot, they seem to be perfectly harmless, which upsets the theory that they might have taken possession of the vessel by force and killed the officers and sailors."

"You say there are twenty of them?"

"I believe that's the number."

"Seems to me the town will have a problem on its hands disposing of them."

"I agree with you. They ought to be taken ashore as soon as possible, for they are decidedly out of place aboard the wreck."

"The authorities will have to pass on that. Are you sure these people are not of the cannibal stripe?"

"Positive. We couldn't get them to eat salt horse, or even canned meat, but they went wild over plum duff, sweet crackers and sugar. We caught several dolphin, and when they were cooked they ate plenty of that article with great relish."

"Well, come up to the office, cap'n, and we'll consider this singular state of affairs. You'll dine with me, so send your boat back with orders for the men to return around ten o'clock," said Mr. Tupper.

Captain Beardsley spoke to the two sailors in the boat, and then accompanied the owner to the warehouse.

The crowd of eager listeners melted away and left Joe Darcy almost alone on the wharf.

"No use of me going aboard of that craft while those

natives are in her," he told himself. "They'd probably follow me about wherever I went to see what I was up to, and as there are twenty of them, I might get into some scrape. My uncle will have to wait for the information he wants till later on."

When Bob Smith, one of the boatmen, returned from his vicinity of the derelict, Joe plied him with questions concerning it.

The answers he got confirmed the impressions he had already formed about the wreck.

"You saw the live fellows aboard of her, didn't you?" he asked.

"I did, and heard them, too."

"They make a lot of noise, I heard Cap'n Beardsley say."

"I should say they do. Sounded like a pack of firecrackers fired off in an empty hogshead."

"The cap'n said they all talk at once. They must be a crazy bunch."

"You've hit it. They look and act like a crowd of lunatics on the rampage."

"They'll have to be landed here. I wonder what the town authorities will do with them?"

"Put them in some building till they can find a way of getting rid of them."

"They'll have to be fed and taken care of in the meanwhile. How are they dressed?"

"In civilized garments for the most part, which they have picked up somewhere—maybe aboard of the wreck. One chap who seems to be the leader had on a plug hat, and he looked tremendously funny in it."

"The cap'n said they're harmless. What's your idea?"

"Couldn't give you any information on the subject. I didn't go aboard to see how they'd deceive me. In fact, no one was permitted to board the craft. Benson attempted to do it, but was warned off by the brig's mate."

Joe had no more to say, and started for the junk store.

"Well, what did you find out?" asked Mr. Darcy, with an air of expectation.

"Nothing that you wanted me to learn," replied the boy.

"Nothing!" said his uncle, with a frown.

"I didn't visit the wreck."

"Why didn't you?" asked the junk dealer, sharply.

"Because I couldn't get a boat, in the first place, and because if I had gone out to the wreck I couldn't have got aboard of her."

"Why not?"

"Because she has a crowd of blackamoors aboard of her."

"Where did they come from?"

"They were aboard the derelict when she was picked up."

"Well, they'll probably be landed to-morrow, then you must get aboard."

"If they are, the town will have something to look at."

"How is that?"

"Because they are a strange race—something out of the ordinary."

"Who told you that?"

"I heard the cap'n tell Mr. Tupper so on the wharf."

"Humph! Go out in the shop now—I'm going to supper."

Joe went to the door and lounged there.

There was still plenty of daylight, and he could see the wreck lying astern of the brig.

While he was looking at her the mate of a coaster came up.

He was looking for sundry marine articles that his craft had run short of.

Joe sold him a small bill and accepted an order on the captain in payment.

This he handed to his uncle when he came downstairs, and then he went to supper himself, and entertained the housekeeper with a description of the derelict and the odd live cargo of her.

CHAPTER III.

THE SKELETON OF THE WRECK.

A consultation was held next morning between Mr. Tupper and the town officials with regard to the disposition of the strange natives.

The authorities did not enthuse over the responsibility that was practically thrust on them, but could not refuse to accept them.

Captain Beardsley was ashore, and, being called into the conference, said that, judging from his experience with the odd people, they could safely be trusted not to give much trouble.

He received permission to land them, and half an hour later three boat loads of them, comprising the bunch, were landed at the Tupper wharf, where an official was on hand to meet them with several of the police force.

A crowd of loungers was on hand to catch a look at them, and Joe was among the spectators.

They came thronging and chattering up the wharf like a troop of man-monkeys, and peculiar looking beings they were.

Short in stature, almost black, with broad shoulders and long, gorilla-like arms, that seemed to hint of great strength, and each of them had upward nostrils, after the mould of the primal ape.

Though hideous in appearance, they seemed uncommon happy in their shore freedom, and acted like beings from another planet suddenly put down on earth.

Everything astonished them, and their jabbering was continuous, like the rattle of musketry.

They followed the two policemen at the head of the column in a perfectly docile manner, and the other officers had no trouble whatever to keep them in order.

There were some old salts in Santa Catalina, but though these shellbacks claimed to have visited every island under the sun, from Borneo and Madagascar to Pitcairn or No Man's Land, they reluctantly admitted that these foreign chaps were the mystery of the marine world.

They couldn't place them to save their lives, nor translate their language.

One sailor ventured an opinion that they resembled the wild men of Borneo, but the other salts disagreed with him, and so the matter could not be settled.

The strangers were housed and fed, and after they had been inspected by the town officers another meeting was

held at which it was decided to ship them off by twos and threes in such outgoing vessels as the captains of which could be prevailed on to take them.

In the meanwhile Joe got permission from Captain Beardsley to go aboard the derelict and inspect her.

This he did after dinner that day.

The deck of the wreck had been cleared of all litter by the crew of the "Star of Hope," and there was nothing to see there except the stumps of the three masts, the badly shattered bulwarks, the working part of the two pumps, the capstan forward, and a few other things that the sea could not wash away.

The galley had disappeared completely, the cabin doors were smashed, the binnacle hood was gone, but the compass was uninjured.

The steering-gear was twisted out of shape, and the rudder had been torn away.

The skylight on the cabin roof was smashed to bits, leaving a gaping hole.

The cabin and staterooms were as bare almost as the day the craft was built.

Everything that could be removed was gone, just as if the vessel had been looted.

The lazarette was also bare of the odds and ends and extra stuff always to be found there.

The forecastle was in the same condition.

As the hatches were all battened down, Joe presumed that the cargo, which from the height of the wreck above the water could not be very weighty, had not been tampered with.

Indeed, it was his opinion that she did not carry any cargo, but was simply in ballast.

"Uncle will be disappointed, for there isn't a bit of rope worth the taking in the derelict," though Joe, after his unsatisfactory survey. "However, he'll be able to bind on plenty of good timber and planking; and there seems to be some brass plates. The copper sheathing, as far as I've been able to see, looks good, and when the old hooker is broken up she'll turn out quite a pile of bolts and other iron material that we can ship to 'Frisco at a good profit."

Joe was standing in the lazarette with a lantern in his hand, as he mused on the unsatisfactory condition of the wreck, and was on the point of retreating to the cabin above when his ears were saluted by a sepulchral groan.

"Goodness, what's that?" exclaimed the boy, his hair almost rising on end, for there wasn't a sign of any living thing in the place, nor a spot where one could have been concealed.

The groan was repeated, even with more gruesome vehemence than before.

Joe had heard about haunted ships, and his legs began to shake.

It did not seem possible that anything human could have given utterance to that blood-curdling sound.

It seemed to echo around the lazarette till the confined space re-echoed with repetitions.

After the lapse of another half a minute came a third groan, followed by a gurgling sound like a death rattle in a man's throat.

That completed Joe's fright, and the way he piled up into the cabin was a caution.

He didn't pause till he got out on deck into the sunshine.

Then his courage began to return, and after some reflection he came to the conclusion that the noise he had heard must have been made by the shifting about of some heavy pieces of cargo against the bulkhead.

"Sure, that's what it was," he said. "There ain't no such thing as ghosts, even if sailors swear there are."

However, he didn't return to the lazarette to pursue further investigations on the subject, but went ashore to make his report to his uncle.

Next morning after the wreck had been surveyed and pronounced good for the junk heap, she was towed onto the beach at high tide, and when the water receded she lay on her side with only a small part of her stern keel in the bay.

The sale had been advertised to take place immediately. It drew a crowd of the idle and curious.

Phelim Darcy was the only bidder, and he had things pretty much his own way.

The derelict was found to be merely ballasted with stones.

Mr. Darcy got the wreck at a bargain, and when the next flood floated his property, a winch and cable drew the hulk high and dry on the shore.

He lost no time in setting men to work on her under Joe's superintendence.

The breaking up of the wreck proceeded rapidly.

The timbers were stacked up on shore, and the other stuff was started at intervals to the shop, where it was stowed in a shed that had lately been built to accommodate Mr. Darcy's increasing stock.

The cabin had been completely demolished, and part of the deck timbers that had formed its floors, revealing the lazarette hole to the sunlight, when one of the wreckers who had gone down into the place brought startling news to the boy.

"Come with me, boss; I've found somethin' that'd better be got out right away and sent to the hospital," he said, a look of excitement glowing on his seamed mahogany countenance.

"What's that?" cried Joe. "What did you find?"

A livin' skeleton."

"A living what?" cried Joe, in astonishment.

"A skeleton—nothin' but skin and bones. It's alive, for it mumbles, rolls its eyes and tries to talk."

"Where did you find it?" asked the boy, following the wrecker.

"Boarded up with vent holes, 'tween the lazarette wall and the stern of the vessel. Looks like a case of murder, for no man could have got into that situation of his own accord."

"One of the blackies, I s'pose," said Joe.

"No, he's a white man, and a sailor, by the cut of his jib."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the boy, excitedly.

"Positive."

"He's alive, you say?"

"Yes. I wouldn't have found him so quick, only he let out an awful groan that almost started the hair on my head. If it hadn't been for the sunshine streamin' down into the place I'd have cut and run."

"Gee! I heard him yesterday afternoon when I was aboard. I was down in the lazarette looking around with a lantern when I heard the most awful sounds that you can imagine. I won't admit that I'm a coward, but as I couldn't see anything in the place I didn't care to stay, so I got out."

"I don't blame you, matey. I'd have done the same thing under them circumstances. But groans sound different in the light. After the first shock I located the spot, found the boards rather loose, pried 'em off and found the skeleton standin' up, or rather braced up with cleats so he couldn't fall down in a heap, as I reckon he would have done if it wasn't for them."

The speaker sprang down into the partly open lazarette, and Joe followed.

The poor victim of somebody's treachery and cruelty couldn't have looked much more like a skeleton if he had been dead and buried for months.

That he had any life at all in him astonished Joe, and testified to his wonderful vitality in the face of slow starvation.

He was a foremast hand beyond a doubt, and so far gone that Joe lost no time in trying to find out who he was, but helped the wrecker to get him out on deck, where he was soon surrounded by many of the other wreckers.

Brandy was administered to him in small doses, and he revived under it.

His eyes rested on Joe, and he stared fixedly at the boy for awhile.

"Bring the wagon up and dump the stuff out of it," said the boy. "We must get this poor fellow to the hospital as fast as we can. While he's got life in him he may be saved."

Joe accompanied the living skeleton to the hospital and turned him over to the astonished doctors.

It didn't take the head doctor long to diagnose the case as one of lingering starvation.

"Think you can save him?" Joe asked.

"I'm afraid not. He's too far gone. We'll do the best we can, but I wouldn't give a cent for his life," replied the sawbones.

That wasn't encouraging, and as Jack had a profound respect for the opinions expressed by the medical fraternity, he departed with the conviction that the rescued man was slated for the cemetery.

While the doctors had not the slightest hopes of saving the man, they believed it to be their duty to give the patient the best of attention.

Nourishment was administered to him with admirable discretion, and he was solicitously watched over by the attending nurses and physicians.

Instead of dying, he seemed to take a fresh grip on life.

The doctors were surprised, and redoubled their exertions to save him if they could.

In the meanwhile Joe returned to the wreck, where the work of demolition had continued during his absence.

The wreckers were still talking about the attenuated resemblance of a man, and speculating as to how he came to be walled up in the lazarette.

Work stopped at sundown, an old shellback, who had been hired as watchman, put in his appearance to stay till morning, and Joe went back to the shop.

When he told his uncle about the living skeleton discovered in the ribs of the wreck, Mr. Darcy was much astonished.

"I took him to the hospital," said Joe, "but if he dies, as no doubt he will, the town will probably expect you to bury him."

"Why so? What have I got to do with him?" asked his uncle, impatiently.

"Why, you bought the wreck and everything in her as she stood, so of course you bought the skeleton. As it's your property, you'll have to look after it."

"Nonsense! I couldn't buy a human being. That's against the law."

"You bought it just the same, and I consider it's yours. You could make a good thing out of it if you wanted to. There's nothing but skin on that chap's bones. After he's dead you could sell the skeleton for a good price to some big doctor in 'Frisco."

Joe spoke with a sober face, as if he meant what he said, and his uncle in great indignation at such a suggestion threw an old book at his head, and then went upstairs to supper.

The boy chuckled and walked to the door where he was presently surrounded by an increasing crowd of curious longshoremen and others who had heard about the discovery of the living skeleton in the wreck, and came to get the particulars of the strange case from Jack.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MEMORY CAME BACK.

Joe dropped in at the hospital next morning, expecting to hear that the skeleton sailor had departed this life during the night.

He was told that the man was still alive, and that the doctors entertained a faint hope of pulling him through.

"If they could pull him through, I'd like to know why so many other people, not half so bad, die under their hands," thought the boy as he walked on to the wreck.

Next morning he visited the hospital again, and to his surprise learned that the patient was doing uncommonly well, considering his condition.

When he reached the shop he found his uncle busy with a customer.

As soon as the man departed, Joe said:

"I'm afraid you're done out of that skeleton, uncle. The hospital people told me that he has a fighting chance to recover. What are you going to do with him if he gets well? You'll have to support him, for he belongs to you, you know."

"That's enough about that sailor, young man," said Mr. Darcy, severely. "If you open your mouth on the subject again I'll take you out and drop you in the bay."

Joe grinned and took charge of the shop.

It took a week to break up the wreck, and by the time the job had been finished, the skeleton sailor was out of danger and on the road to recovery.

But while strength and substance reclothed his frame, his memory remained a blank.

He remembered nothing prior to the moment he came to himself in the hospital.

The town daily had recorded his progress as a matter of general interest, for the public expected to learn from his lips the mystery of the wreck, and gain the needed information about the queer natives who were still a public charge.

The doctors first tried to learn his identity, but he shook his head and gave them to understand in good English that he didn't know it himself.

Then they asked him about the wreck and the dark-skinned strangers, but he declared that he had no more knowledge of either than if they had never existed.

When a reporter called to interview him he was told at the office that his mission was useless, since the man's mind appeared to be a complete blank on all things that had happened to him before he was brought to the hospital.

The paper printed this and so Joe learned about it.

When Mr. Darcy heard the news from his nephew, the thought struck him that he could find use for the sailor.

As nobody else was likely to want him, unless it was some sea captain, the junk dealer figured that he could secure the man's services for little or nothing in addition to his board.

So as soon as he learned that the sailor was about to be discharged, cured, he sent Joe around to the hospital to bring him to the shop.

The sailor looked hard at the boy, and asked him if he hadn't seen him before.

"Yes. I helped get you out of your prison in the lazarette of the wreck," replied Joe.

"I don't know nothin' about that there wreck, my hearty," said the sailor. "The chaps here have slung it at me every once in awhile, expectin' I'd tell 'em somethin' about it; but though I tried to think what they were talkin' about, I couldn't tell 'em the first thing. I've slipped a cog somewhere in my head, and I can't even remember my name nor where I came from. They told me I came into this here port in a derelict, with a lot of savages, and that I was discovered nailed up in a small place under the cabin, but lord bless you, that didn't help me out a bit, for I don't remember nothin' about it. I do remember your face somehow, though I can't place you no how."

"Well, you only saw me once, and that was under the circumstances I described," said Joe, who then stated his errand, and the man went with him willingly enough, which was not surprising, since he had no place else to go, and no money to pay his way.

Thus the strange sailor became an inmate of the Darcy establishment, and it was soon apparent that he had taken a great fancy to Joe.

At length complete bodily restoration began to enliven his mind, and his memory began to reassert itself in spots.

Joe was his confidant, and every time he thought of something new, he imparted the fact to the boy.

"You're coming around all right, old chap," said Joe, encouragingly to him one day as they sat sunning themselves on the fluke of a big anchor outside. "Now if you

could only get your name back, that might help you a whole lot."

"That's right," nodded the sailor, squinting his eye at Mr. Darcy's sign of "Marine Junk Shop." "Why, there's my name now, up there," he exclaimed in some excitement. "What's it doin' there?"

"Where's your name?" asked Joe, somewhat excited, too.

"Over the door—Junk. That's my name—Jack Junk."

"The dickens you say," cried Joe. "So your name is really Jack Junk?"

"That's what I was christened, my hearty, and what's more, I remember where I was born, and a lot of other matter besides."

He immediately proceeded to tell Joe that he was born in New Bedford, Mass., and first went to sea as a boy in a whaler.

He went over a whole chapter of his boyhood's days, and his first sea voyage.

One thing led to another, as his memory unrolled itself before him like a panorama, and for an hour he reeled off his life story to Joe's great satisfaction.

Apparently everything was coming back to him, and the boy listened with great interest.

Voyage after voyage followed each other, or rather fragments of them, and he was rapidly approaching that part of his life which would unravel the mystery of the wreck, and the identity of her mysterious passengers, when Phelim Darcy appeared at the door and interrupted the narrative by calling on Junk to lend him a hand.

The sailor got up willingly and followed his employer inside, while Joe impatiently awaited his return, for he felt he would soon have news he was smart enough to understand he could sell to the newspaper.

Five minutes later his uncle called him inside himself and started him loading the wagon with an order to be delivered at a schooner moored beside one of the wharves.

When he got back there was a load of crated iron junk waiting for him to take to a sloop to be carried to San Francisco.

Junk helped him get it on the wagon.

A second load awaited him when he returned, and for the rest of the afternoon his hands were full.

After dark when he and Junk had eaten their supper and shut up shop, Joe asked the sailor to go on with his experiences.

To his disappointment Junk couldn't remember where he had knocked off, nor could he recall a quarter of what he had already narrated.

Finally, in desperation, Joe took the sailor outside and pointed to the word "Junk" in the moonlight, but it didn't do much good.

The sailor hadn't forgotten that his name was Junk, nor many other things, but he couldn't tell anything new, so the boy had to forego the pleasure of learning how the sailor came to be connected with the natives, and got walled up in the wreck.

Things went on in this way for several weeks, during which time the town managed to get rid of the jabbering natives by degrees.

About a dozen of them were hired by the Southern Pa-

cific Railroad to work on section gangs, and here their unusual strength made them quite valuable.

They picked up English words relating to their vocation quite rapidly, though they never ceased to jabber among themselves, and they never gave the foreman any trouble at all.

One Sunday Joe was reading over his precious letter for perhaps the hundredth time, when Junk came into his room, without any formality, as was his custom.

"I s'pose you never heard of a lone island somewhere out in the Pacific called the Thimble, have you?" asked Joe, as he folded up the letter and returned it to its envelope.

"The Thimble!" cried the sailor. "Why, of course I have. I was wrecked on it."

"Wrecked on it!" cried Joe, his heart giving a great jump. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do, my hearty; and what's more, that there name brings everythin' back to me—my stay on the island, the strange natives I found there, and the treasure. Say, Joe, my lad, you and I must go there by hook or crook. There's gold enough in a cave there to make us both rich for life."

"I know it," replied the boy, his face aglow with excitement.

"How did you know it?" asked the sailor, apparently much surprised.

"This letter, written by a chap named Ned Brace, to a friend of his here in Santa Catalina, says there's a hidden treasure on Thimble Island in a big cave. He says he saw it with his own eyes; but he says nothing about any inhabitants being on the island. He says he believes that it's a pirate's forgotten plunder. He intended to interest somebody financially able to charter a schooner to go there and recover it; but before he could put his plan in force he was stabbed in a scrap on the street in Melbourne and was dying in the hospital at the time he wrote the letter. He broke off just as he was about to give the bearings of the island, and the person who mailed the letter signed his name to the unfinished narrative. From which I conclude he was not able to continue, and probably died soon after."

"A blamed good thing he did," said Junk, emphatically, "otherwise you and me would have been dished out of the gold. But I don't see when that chap could have been there, for I was a prisoner for five years on the island."

"A prisoner! Tell me about it," cried Joe, eagerly.

"Sure I will, and you'll learn what you've been so anxious to find out—how me and them natives happened to be afloat on that there wreck which was picked up and brought into this here port by the—what did you say the name of the craft was?"

"The Star of Hope."

She didn't prove no star of hope for me, but just the opposite. Now listen and I'll spin you the greatest yarn you ever heard," said the sailor.

"Wait a moment till I lock the door. I don't want my uncle popping in here and interrupting you, for your brain might go off wool gathering again."

"No fear of that, my hearty, I reckon, for I can think now as well as I ever did in my life. Now we'll heave ahead."

The sailor stuck his legs on the windowsill, expectorated, and changing his quid, commenced his story.

CHAPTER V.

THE SAILOR'S YARN.

Junk's yarn began with the moment he was landed on Thimble Island, the only survivor, after a terrible gale, of the brigantine Morning Glory.

He subsisted for three days on shellfish and bread fruit before he was aware the island possessed other living beings than himself.

Where they sprang from he had no idea at the time, for he had been all over the Thimble, and seen no trace of habitations or inhabitants.

They did appear, however, and he found himself a prisoner.

They were a wild looking, jabbering people, of great strength and agility, and of peculiar habits.

They lived in a succession of marine caverns, and obtained their food from the bread fruit, banana, yam and other trees growing on the surface of the island, as well as shellfish, sharks and dolphins from the water.

Junk said they treated him fine, but would not let him out of the caverns, but once a month, for exercise, when they kept strict watch on his movements.

"They made me their king," went on Junk, "and used to kowtow to me mornin' and night, but bless your heart I was more of a slave than a king since I couldn't do nothin' they objected to. I had all I wanted to eat, and the softest bunk in the place, but playin' king was the worst experience I ever had in my life. After I'd been there a year, one chap, who acted as the boss of the place, took me to an inner cave and showed me two big sea chests full of gold. At least, they appeared to be full of it, for the whole top part of each was covered with old Spanish gold coin. It made my mouth water, you can well believe, my hearty, and I amused myself makin' plans to get away with it some day. I figured that it was a long lane that didn't have a turn, and as I was strong and hearty, and in my prime, I hoped to make my escape from the place in the course of time, when I meant to come back with a party strong enough to take the treasure away by force."

The lane did have a turn, or you wouldn't be here now," said Joe.

"Aye, aye, but not the turn I was lookin' for. However, all's well that ends well."

"How came you and the natives to get afloat in that wreck?"

"I'm comin' to that. I got so that I could understand the general meaning of the strange lingo them chaps called a language. I never did get the hang of it so that I could make out their conversation, or talk it myself, but I picked up a lot of words and expressions, d'ye see, that helped me out with them when I wanted anythin'. What puzzled me somewhat was the absence of any women folks. There warn't a petticoat on the island, so I came to the conclusion that the bunch had got wrecked there somehow after startin' out on some expedition; but I never could understand where they came from, for they didn't look like any breed of islanders I'd ever seen before, and I've knocked around the globe pretty considerable."

"The chaps who came here on the wreck puzzled all the

shellbacks in port," said Joe. "Not a sailor hereabouts had ever seen their like before."

"I don't wonder, my hearty—they're a strange lot. Well, the long and short of my yarn is I was there five years, and might have been there to-day but for that there wreck. She came ashore, just as you seen her, one day after a heavy gale, and judging from the jabbering of the natives after they found her, there wasn't a soul aboard of her. They brought me up specially to look at her, and then they fell to and stripped her of everythin' they could take out of her. They piled it all in one of the caves. There were among other things eight or nine sailors' bags, and a lot of clothes from the officers' quarters. The natives dressed themselves up in the stuff so they could look like me, I suppose."

"How many natives were there altogether?" asked Joe.

"Just twenty—the number that came into port here."

"Then there aren't no more left on the island?"

"Not a livin' soul. That's why it'll be easy for you and me to sail there and take possession of that there treasure," said the sailor.

Joe's mouth watered at the idea of the thing, though he didn't consider at the moment how he was going to accomplish the feat.

"Then you know exactly where the island is?" he said.

"Near enough for all purposes. I ain't got its exact bearin's, but we can find out, for Thimble Island is down on the charts of the South Pacific, and all a chap has to do is to get a chart, pick out the spots and make a note of it."

"That's fine," cried Joe. "But hold on, the man Ben Brace wrote this letter to may have found a way of getting to the island with some comrades, in which case they may have carried off the treasure, and we'd find nothing but the chests when we got there."

Junk knitted his brows and spit out of the window.

"Let me see that there letter," he said.

Joe handed it to him.

He found so much difficulty in trying to decipher the scrawl addressed to a chap named Bill Herring, that he asked the boy to read it to him.

This Joe did readily enough, for he had the writing down by heart.

The contents of the letter clearly set forth that there was a big treasure of gold coin in an inner cave on Thimble Island.

The entrance to the cave was through a huge rock shaped like a thimble, and which had given the island its name.

The writer, evidently being pressed for time, used no superfluous words, therefore he did not explain how he came to be on the island alone, how long he had been there, at what time, or how he happened to discover the treasure.

He merely stated the most important facts in as few words as possible, and even at that did not say all he intended to say.

When Joe finished reading the sailor scratched his head.

"That there letter said enough to put Herring on the track of the gold, but it ain't by no means certain he could get to the island," he said.

"I should think he'd stand as good a chance as you and I," said Joe.

"What's the date of the letter?"

Joe looked and saw it was more than a year old.

"A year, eh? How long have I been in this town?"

"About two months."

"I reckon the wreck was afloat about three months. That makes five months since I left the island. There wasn't no stranger there then. Anyway, I reckon we ain't got no time to lose."

"You haven't told how you and the natives got afloat."

"It was by accident. You see that there wreck went ashore in a cove near the cave. About half her stern was in the water all the time, and more of her when the tide was up. The natives used to go aboard of her every day lookin' for somethin' more to get out of her. Sometimes they'd take me with them. They must have noticed that the hulk was workin' loose. At any rate, they tied her fast to one of the trees with a rope they'd taken from her. That held the old thing in place, and so they thought she was as certain to stay there as if she'd taken root. The boss of the crowd, who sported a plug hat he had probably found in the skipper's stateroom, got the idea in his head that she'd make a fine storehouse for food, so he ordered the crowd to fill her up with bananas, yams, and such. As things turned out it was a lucky thing he did, but it would have been luckier if he'd started to do this sooner. They brought me out to watch them do the work. I had to sit on the fok's'l under an awnin' of sailcloth they rigged up and look on. On the afternoon of the third day a sudden squall came on out of a clear sky. The squall came across the island, tearin' things up generally. The whole gang was aboard stowing bananas in the fok's'l when the wind struck us. Before you could whisper Jack Robinson, the rope holdin' the wreck to the island snapped like a pipe-stem. The tide happened to be in at the time, and the wind shoved us into deep water and away from shore in no time at all. The natives rushed to the side intendin' to jump overboard and swim for the beach. The hulk careened and dumped the crowd into the port scupper, and I narrowly missed goin' overboard myself. Then the wreck dipped the other way, and the natives went slidin' to the starboard. And so she kept on till the squall spent itself and we found ourselves two mile from the island, driftin' further away every minute."

"Gee!" exclaimed Joe.

"There wasn't no escape for the crowd now, and so they had to make the best of the situation. As for me, I welcomed any change that would give me a chance of reachin' a ship that would take me off. That was where I counted my chickens before they were hatched. After floatin' about like a chip on a mill stream for several weeks, only catchin' sight of an occasional sail at a distance, our provisions began to run short, for half of the bananas sp'iled under the heat, and wasn't fit for nothin' but to be tossed overboard to the fishes. Then we was caught in a terrible storm which lasted nearly a week, and durin' which I expected every moment we'd turn turtle and go to the bottom. But we didn't, else I wouldn't be sittin' here now tellin' you my yarn. The fellow in the plug hat had put me on a diet, only givin' me food every other day. After two days of fine weather we sighted a brig bearin' down on us. I could have hugged myself with joy. I thought my troubles over; but they weren't by a long chalk. They were only beginnin', as I soon discovered. The people aboard the brig

made the wreck out, and for fear they'd haul their wind and make off on another tack, thinkin' there wasn't no one aboard, I pulled off my jacket, tied it to a stick and began wavin' it to attract their attention. The next thing I knew I was on my back with half a dozen natives sittin' on my chest, and I was yanked down into the lazarette. Under the directions of the scamp in the plug hat I was walled in as you found me, and there I was left. I had no idea what happened after that. I got nothin' more to eat, and I'd sooner let my share of that there treasure go, if I had it alongside of me, than go through that experience again. Finally I must have lost my senses, for the next thing I knew was bein' in bed in that hospital, feelin' as weak as a baby."

Jack Junk stopped, and, taking the well chewed quid from his mouth, shied it at a dog outside, after which he bit off another liberal piece of navy plug and stuck it into his cheek.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUND FOR SYDNEY.

After that Joe and the sailor had almost daily conferences over the subject of the treasure presumed to be still on Thimble Island.

"My uncle would never let me go off on what he'd call a wild goose chase," said Joe one evening. "Besides, neither of us has any money to speak of, so how could we charter even a small sloop for such an enterprise?"

"I'll admit that's a big difficulty," replied Junk. "I don't see but we'll have to take your uncle into our confidence. He'd get plenty of money, I reckon, and he wouldn't miss the expense."

"He looks at a dollar several times before he spends it, that's why he's well off, though he won't admit that he is," said Joe. "He'd have to have a photograph of that treasure, and the sworn statements of reliable people, before he'd hazard a red on any scheme looking to recover it. Even then he'd want three-quarters of it for his share."

"Which I reckon he wouldn't get. If that's the kind of chap he is, and I'm bound to say he looks it, we'll leave him out of the question, and wait till luck comes our way. You've got the latitude and longitude of Thimble Island now marked down all right."

"Yes, the mate of the bark Day Dream calculated it from his chart."

"Very good. All we've got to do now is to wait."

"Wait, yes; but if Bill Herring gets ahead of us our cake will be all dough."

"Seein' as we can't make no move at present, we've got to chance it," said the sailor, squirting a stream of tobacco juice into the water.

Morning, noon and night Joe could think of nothing but the gold on Thimble Island.

His uncle caught him a dozen times a day standing at his work thinking and looking straight ahead as if he saw something on the wall, or outside, that took up all his attention.

"You're getting to be all-fired lazy, young man," cried

Phelim Darcy one morning, angrily. "What in thunder has come over you of late?"

"I was just thinking of something," replied Joe, getting a hustle on.

"Thinking of something! You seem to be thinking of something all the time. I ain't paying and supporting you to think, but to work. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see that you keep awake after this, or you and me'll have a run-in."

That evening after supper Joe and Junk took a boat and went down to the Point to fish.

It was cloudy but comparatively calm, and such nights, Joe knew from experience, the fish always bit readily.

They reached the Point, which was quite a row, threw out their lines, and were soon busy hauling in the fish.

While they fished they talked, and, of course, their talk was about Thimble Island and its treasure.

They seldom talked about anything else.

Joe was never tired of hearing in detail the sailor's long-drawn-out experience in the marine caverns of the island while a prisoner in the hands of the natives, and Junk found a pleasure in recalling his five years of hard luck because the boy was so interested in that experience.

At length the tide turned and they stopped their sport.

They had two or three times as much fish as the house-keeper could use, so Joe figured that he would sell the excess in the morning aboard the different craft at the wharves.

They had only one pair of oars, but that was enough, as they took turns pulling.

Junk took the first spell at them when they started back.

The tide was strong against them, and the sailor bent down to his work, taking long, regular pulls.

One of the oars, having a weak spot in it, snapped short off, and the boat began to drift back with the current.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Joe. "We can't scull against this tide. We'll be carried out to sea."

"There's a light yonder. Maybe that craft is headin' in and we'll get a tow," replied the sailor.

They watched the light awhile, but it didn't get any nearer, so they came to the conclusion that the craft was not bound in for Santa Catalina.

By that time they were a mile off shore, and the weather seaward was growing hazy.

"We're in a nice scrape," said Joe. "Hang that oar! I wonder where my uncle picked it up. There was some defect in it or it never would have broken."

"Well, there ain't no use kickin'. We must grin and bear it," said Junk, philosophically.

"I s'pose I can bear it as well as you, but I don't feel like grinning over it," growled the boy.

"When the tide turns it will take us back."

"Yes, when it does, and then we're likely to land somewhere down the coast."

"As long as we land somewhere, what's the difference?"

"The difference will be that we'll be done out of our night's rest."

"If you was a sailor you wouldn't think nothin' of that," said Junk, cheerfully, taking a fresh chew.

Joe made no answer, but stared at the pile of fish in the bottom of the boat.

The air was growing hazy and damp around them, and the outlook was far from pleasant.

The shore line had long since vanished in the darkness, and they were alone on the Pacific.

Everything was as quiet as a country churchyard, except when the sailor expectorated over the side at intervals, or moved his boots on the planking.

"If we was only aboard some craft now makin' for that island, I wouldn't mind," remarked Junk at length.

For once Joe wasn't in a treasure-talking mood, so he said nothing.

"Gone to sleep, my hearty?" asked the sailor.

"No."

"Why don't you talk, then?"

"Don't feel like it."

Jack Junk chuckled and said nothing more.

The fog closed in around them and they drifted further and further out to sea.

They buttoned their jackets around them and tried to keep warm, but the chill and dampness of the mist was not to be kept out.

In the course of an hour they heard a vessel's bell announcing ten o'clock.

Joe stood up and uttered a loud "halloa!"

The stillness was such that his voice carried some distance, and he was heard by the watch aboard the nearby craft.

A shout came back.

"You scull, Jack, while I keep track of the craft," said Joe.

The boy kept shouting at intervals, and received replies.

Presently a white light lit up the fog at no great distance.

It was a combination of sulphur and other inflammable materials manufactured for illuminating purposes at sea. It made an excellent guide for the sailor to steer for. Presently the dark outline of a vessel came into sight.

Suddenly the light went out and left things darker by contrast than ever.

But the boat was now close aboard of the vessel, and there was little chance of passing her.

At any rate, a member of the watch called out occasionally, and Joe answered till the craft was only a few yards away, hove to waiting for the boat to come up.

A lantern attached to a rope was lowered over the vessel's side, and Jack Junk ran the boat up to it.

Unshipping the lantern, Joe made the boat fast to it.

A rope ladder was dropped down and the sailor and the boy presently stood on the vessel's deck and in the presence of the second mate.

"How do you do, sir," said Joe. "My name is Darcy, and my companion is named Junk. We were fishing at the entrance to Santa Catalina Bay. When we started back one of our oars broke, and the tide being on the ebb, we drifted out to sea and into this fog. It's lucky we ran across you, for we are chilled to the bone, and we'd have been in a bad way by morning."

"You drifted some distance. We're all of six miles off the coast according to our calculations. Come into the

cabin and I'll treat you chaps to a glass of spirits to drive the chill out. If this weather holds during the night we sha'n't make much headway, so you might as well stay all night aboard."

"What craft is this?" asked Joe.

"Brig Reindeer; Morton, master, from Los Angeles, bound for Sydney."

"That's a long voyage," said Joe, as they followed the mate into the cabin.

"Pretty tidy one," replied the mate.

Joe never drank anything in the stimulant line, but he was prevailed on to take a dose on this occasion to warm him up.

The mate then sent Junk to the forecabin to occupy a spare bunk there, and after chatting awhile with Joe, whose uncle he knew by reputation, he led the boy to a small stateroom off the passage and told him to turn in.

The chief mate took the deck when the watch was changed at midnight, and the second officer reported to him the arrival on board of the sailor and the boy.

"How do they expect to get ashore in the morning?" asked the first mate.

"They've got a boat, and only need an oar, which we can spare them. It's quite calm, and likely to hold that way all night, so they won't have more than eight or nine miles to pull at the outside."

The chief officer walked away without further remark, and the second mate went to his room to turn in for four hours.

Half an hour later the wind came up and the brig began to glide through the water.

"I guess those chaps won't row ashore in the morning," thought the chief mate. "They'll have to stay aboard till we meet some vessel bound in for the coast. As we're short handed, they can turn to and help out."

The wind rapidly increased to a brisk breeze, and by the time eight bells rang again (four A. M.) and the second mate turned out, Santa Catalina bore E. N. E. about forty miles away.

The brig was then making about ten knots, and increasing it every moment.

"No use calling those chaps at daylight, as you probably intended," said the chief mate. "We're too far from land for them to take to their boat. We need hands, and when Captain Morton sees them in the morning he'll propose that they sign for the voyage. If they refuse, the only thing we can do is to put them aboard the first craft we meet bound east. That chance may not turn up in a week or more, and in the meantime they'll have to turn to and make themselves useful."

Thus speaking, the mate turned on his heel and went down the companion ladder.

When Joe came on deck about six o'clock, the brig had increased her distance from the coast some twenty-five miles more.

Junk was leaning over the gangway and ruminating over the situation.

Being a sailor, he judged from the look of things that they were not likely to see Santa Catalina again for some days to come, if they did then.

Joe went up to him.

"Say, Jack, we're sailing away from the coast fast. What are we going to do?" he said.

"We'll do whatever the skipper of this brig says, I reckon," replied the sailor.

"He won't keep us on board against our wills."

"Do you want to put out in a rowboat sixty miles from shore?"

"Of course not."

"Then we'll have to stay where we are."

"Are we really sixty miles from Santa Catalina?"

"Over that, so the second mate says."

"But we've got to get back somehow."

"If the skipper speaks a vessel in a day or two, p'raps he'll send us back, otherwise we'll have to stay aboard and turn in with the crew. I've heard the brig is short-handed, so I reckon the cap'n won't be over anxious to lose us."

"But the vessel is bound for Sydney."

"That don't make no difference."

"I'm thinking we made a mistake in not borrowing an oar last night and putting back while the weather was calm."

"Maybe this will turn out a piece of good luck for us."

"How?"

"We're on the road to Thimble Island. Who knows but we may find a chance to get there before we return to California? I'm in favor of shippin' aboard this hooker and drawin' pay. I advise you to do the same. I don't think either of us could do better if we expect to hunt for that treasure."

"But I ain't a sailor."

"You'll soon learn the ropes, my hearty. A spell at sea will do you good."

"What will my uncle say when we fail to turn up?"

"What difference does it make what he says? You do as I say and you'll come out all right. We'll have a look in at Thimble Island somehow before we get back."

The chance of reaching the island where the treasure was prevailed with Joe, and so when, later on, the captain of the brig proposed that he and Junk sign articles and make the voyage, he consented almost as willingly as his companion.

CHAPTER VII.

DORA DENT.

For the next three weeks the weather held fair, and the brig made good progress toward her destination, for she was a fast sailer.

By that time Joe had learned the ropes and had acquired a first-class pair of sea legs.

The captain was a decent sort of man, and the mates came within the same category, so that the crew had nothing to find fault with.

They attended to their duty in good shape and required no discipline.

Thus Joe's first sea experience was a whole lot pleasanter than usually fell to the lot of a new beginner.

The weather, however, changed at last, and the brig ran into a heavy gale that lasted three days, and was so much

strained that Captain Morton headed for a port in one of the largest of the Fiji Islands in order to have important repairs made before continuing his voyage.

As soon as Jack Junk learned this he took Joe aside and said:

"We're goin' to put in at Papua."

"Are we?" replied the boy. "Where's that?"

Jack mentioned the name of the island.

"It's one of the Fiji group," he said. "And it's just the place we want to reach, so as to be handy to Thimble Island."

"Is that so?" said Joe eagerly.

"That's so, my hearty. Therefore you and me'll shake the brig there. It'll be easy for us to do it, as no one will suspect our intentions. Just keep a stiff upper lip, and do what I tell you, and me and you'll get that treasure before you're much older."

"If we leave the brig, how will we get along without money on shore?"

"Don't you worry, matey. We'll pull through all right."

"All right. I'm with you. I don't care nothing about Sydney. Thimble Island is what I'm after."

"Of course you are. When we get hold of that treasure we're made for the rest of our natural lives."

Joe was tickled to death to think that the chance to reach Thimble Island had come, though how he and Junk were going to get there from Papua, without the necessary funds to charter some kind of a craft, was beyond him.

The sailor spoke so confidently of the probability of them reaching the island that he did not allow the difficulties that stood in the way to worry him any.

Next morning the island they were bound for hove in sight, and before noon they were at anchor off Papua.

It was the first foreign place Joe had ever visited, and naturally he was interested in it, although it was not much of a town, as towns go.

The British authority was paramount here, as the islands of the group belong to the English crown.

Of course, the natives largely outnumbered the whites in the settlement, but they were no longer the savage cannibals they had been once on a time, half a century or so before.

That horrible practice had practically been stamped out all over the group.

The captain found that it would take the best part of a week to make the repairs needed, so the crew were allowed shore leave, about a third of them at a time.

Jack Junk and Joe went together on the first day, and instead of spending their time in the dram shops, like sailors were wont to do, they separated themselves from the two companions who accompanied them, and went around looking at the shipping in the port.

Most of the vessels were small craft that plied among the islands, as Junk knew, for he had been at Papua before, and his purpose was to find a small vessel that would take them to Tongatabu, the largest of the Friendly Islands, a small group to the east and south of the Fijis.

This would bring them within reaching distance, Junk said, of Thimble Island.

As luck would have it there was a small native craft, about the size and build of an ordinary sloop, which was on the point of sailing for the place Junk wanted to reach.

The skipper was a hang-dog looking rascal, formerly a beach comber, and no doubt, in his young days, an escaped convict from Australia.

Joe didn't like his looks, and wanted to have nothing to do with him, but Junk said he was just the chap for them, as he would help them to slip their ship when another captain might not be inclined to do so.

"At any rate, my hearty, if we don't make some kind of a deal with this fellow, we might not strike another chance in a month," said the sailor.

Joe had nothing more to say, so Junk walked up to the skipper of the craft and began negotiations.

They fixed matters up between them, and the skipper told them to return in a couple of hours, ready to embark.

Joe and his companion filled in the time strolling around town, and at the expiration of the two hours appeared on the wharf and stepped on board of the sloop.

Fifteen minutes later the craft cut loose from her moorings and started seaward.

As she would pass close to the brig, Joe and the sailor kept out of sight in the little cabin, so that their presence aboard would not be noticed.

During the trip to the port of Tongatabu, Joe and Junk made themselves as useful as they could, and the hard-looking skipper treated them first rate.

It took a week to cover the distance, and they had good weather all the way.

Finally the big island hove in sight, and about dark the sloop ran in close to the shore and dropped her anchor.

The agreement Jack Junk had made with the skipper included their services in helping to unload the sloop, and also to load her for the return trip.

This they faithfully carried out during the following week, and as soon as the sloop was ready to sail back for Papua, Joe and the sailor started off to look up temporary quarters for themselves in the town.

This was not easy, as they had no funds, but luck came to their assistance.

They were walking along the water front, offering their services here and there at the different grog shops in return for board and lodging, without success so far, when Joe spied a pretty white girl coming toward them, followed by a man, who looked like the mate of a vessel, whom she was trying to avoid.

The man caught up with her and addressed her in a free and easy way.

The girl stopped and said:

"I want nothing to do with you, Mr. Price. If you don't stop annoying me I will report your conduct to my father."

"Pooh!" returned the man, banteringly. "You won't do anything of the kind. You're like all the women, as skittish as a young colt till you're broken to harness. You've taken my eye, and as I'm looking for a wife, why, you can't do better than to tie up with me. I've got money and can rig you out in a way that'll make you the envy of other women, and——"

"Marry you, indeed!" cried the girl, scornfully. "Not if there wasn't another man on earth."

"I guess you'll change your tone, young lady, before I'm through with you," said the man, angrily. "I've determined to have you, so there isn't any use of you trying to shake me. Your father has gone on to Kaka, and won't

be back till late. Before he gets back you'll be Mrs. Price, or I'll know why not."

"Never!" cried the girl, darting forward.

The mate dashed after her, but Joe, who had heard the conversation, stepped between them as he was about to seize her.

"Hold on," said the boy, grabbing the mate by the arm. "Just leave that young lady alone."

"You young sculpin!" roared the furious man. "How dare you interfere? Out of my way!"

"What right have you to annoy a girl that wants nothing to do with you?" returned Joe, pluckily.

With an imprecation the mate aimed a blow at his head with his hairy fist, that had the weight of a sledge-hammer.

The boy dodged and escaped it.

The girl had stopped when she saw she had a defender, though he was only a boy, and stood watching the trouble with a beating heart.

The mate reached out and seized Joe in a vise-like grip, and it doubtless would have gone hard with him had not Jack Junk stepped in and caught the man's arm as he was about to slug the lad.

To have a common sailor lay hands on him made the mate twice as furious as before, and he let go of Joe and tried to knock Junk down.

He got in one blow that staggered the sailor, but the second missed fire because Joe sprang forward and punched him in the jaw.

A crowd began to gather around the belligerents to see the scrap.

As Price turned on Joe, the sailor smashed him on the other jaw with his fist and sent him down on the sidewalk, half dazed.

"Let's get away," said Junk, grabbing Joe and hauling him through the crowd.

They soon came up to the girl, and Joe politely raised his cap to her.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you," she said.

"Don't mention it, miss," replied the boy. "We'll protect you if he comes this way. Can we take you anywhere?"

"If you will see me down to the wharf where my father's schooner is moored I will consider it a favor."

"Certainly. Come along with us. Who is that man who was so rude to you?"

"His name is Price. He's the chief mate of the bark Ceres out in the stream. My father brought him aboard our vessel some days ago and introduced him to me. Since then he has been aboard three times and paying me pointed attentions. To-day he came again, but I refused to see him. He evidently hung around and watched me, for as I was coming out of a shop on the next street he came up and addressed me. I hurried away without noticing him, but he hastened after me, and then spoke to me as you saw."

"I guess your father will make him sick when you tell him what the fellow has done to you," said Joe.

"We will be very angry, and will report his conduct to the captain of the bark. You look like a sailor, you and your friend. What vessel do you belong to?"

"We don't belong to any vessel, miss. We arrived here

on a sloop from Papua a few days ago. My name is Joe Darcy, and my friend is Jack Junk. We belong in Santa Catalina, California. May I ask your name?"

"Dora Dent. My father is Captain Richard Dent, of the schooner Starlight. There she is lying at that wharf. Where are you stopping? My father will want to thank you for your kind interference in my behalf."

"We are not stopping anywhere, miss. The fact is we haven't any money, and are looking around for a place to work for our meals and a bed till we get away from this place," said Joe.

"You shall stop aboard the schooner until you see my father. He will provide for you so you won't suffer. In fact, if you would like to ship with us, he'll take you, because we're short one hand, and I guess we can use another, too," she said.

"Thank you, miss. We'll stop on the schooner to-night, if your father doesn't object when he gets back; but we can't ship with you because we have some business on hand. Our object in coming here was to go to——"

A punch in the ribs from Jack Junk cut him short.

They had reached the schooner by this time.

"Allow me to help you aboard, miss," said Joe.

"Thank you," she answered laughingly, taking his hand and jumping on the deck—a feat she could easily have accomplished without his assistance.

Joe and the sailor followed her aboard.

The latter hung back while the boy followed Miss Dent aft to the companionway leading down into the cabin.

Dora threw her straw hat on the table and sat down, motioning Joe to take a chair.

"You don't look like a common sailor, Mr. Darcy," she said with a smile. "How came you to go to sea?"

Joe explained how he and his companion had drifted out of the bay of Santa Catalina in the night and got mixed up in an off-shore fog.

Then he told her how they had been picked up by the brig Reindeer, and finding themselves many miles from the coast next morning, had shipped for the voyage to Sydney and back.

He explained that a three days' gale had disabled the brig so that her captain was obliged to put in to Papua for repairs, and that he and Junk had deserted the vessel there and come on to the island of Tongatabu in order to carry out a project they had formed many weeks since in Catalina.

"Now you know why we're here," he concluded.

"I don't approve of you deserting your brig," she said, with a shake of her head.

"I admit that it wasn't just right, but if I could explain our reason I think you'd excuse us," said Joe.

Knowing that sailors, and particularly green hands, were often harshly handled by brutal skippers and mates, Dora immediately concluded that that was the reason why the boy and his companion had left the brig so unceremoniously, and so she was inclined to excuse them.

At any rate, she felt under great obligations to Joe, and, moreover, was quite taken by his good looking and open countenance, so she did not feel like chiding the boy even if he was guilty of leaving his vessel without permission.

While they were talking, the cook, who was also steward, too, came in to lay the table for tea.

Dora told him she had a visitor, and to place two plates. She also told him to provide for the sailor, who was on deck.

"I do wish you would ship with us," she said to Joe, during the meal.

"I'd like to myself," he replied, for he was rather smitten with the fair girl; "but you see Junk and I have a very important expedition on hand."

"As you said you had no money, I don't see how you can get along unless you can pick up a job somewhere in town," she said.

"It's going to be tough sailing, I guess, but if we succeed in our venture we'll have more money than we'll know what to do with."

"Indeed!" Dora said, regarding him curiously.

"Yes, if I were to tell you what we are after it would make you open your eyes."

"It must be something unusual."

"It is. If you promise me not to say a word to any one, not even your father, I'll tell you."

"I promise."

"Very well, I'll trust you. Jack and I are after a pirate's treasure."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT.

"A pirate's treasure!" exclaimed Dora, in astonishment.

"Yes. It's hidden on an island not a great distance from here. I was just thinking that maybe your father might take us to the island and help us secure the treasure. If Jack is willing, I'd be in favor of making a deal with him that ought to pay him well—better than the profits he makes out of one of his voyages. That would solve all our difficulties. We needn't hang around this town for the lord knows how long waiting for a chance to get to the island that might never turn up unless we were willing to divide up with some skipper, who probably wouldn't treat us nearly so fairly as your father."

"Well, if you really could prove to my father that a treasure existed on one of these islands, I dare say he would be glad to help you get it for a reasonable compensation, particularly as you have rendered me quite a service, for which he will naturally be grateful," said Dora.

"I'll tell you the story and let you judge for yourself," said Joe, who forthwith put the girl in possession of all the facts connected with the treasure which he confidently believed was hidden that moment on Thimble Island.

He told her Jack's story of his five years' sojourn on the island in the hands of the strange natives who were no longer there to oppose anyone entering the caverns, and all about the sailor's strenuous experience on the wreck that was brought into Santa Catalina by the *Star of Hope*.

Dora was greatly interested and not a little astonished.

"Now," said Joe, "you know all. I don't know what Jack would say to me if he knew I had been making a confidant of you. He'd be pretty mad, I guess. He'd say I put it in the way of your father to go to the island and get the treasure for himself, leaving us in the lurch. He'd never believe you'd keep the story a secret from him, for

the chance of securing a large amount of money is a tremendous temptation to anybody. However, I disagree with Jack. I have perfect confidence in you, Miss Dent, and I feel sure that you wouldn't go back on me," said Joe, earnestly.

"Thank you for saying so, Mr. Darcy," replied the girl. "You may be sure I will never let the knowledge pass my lips without your permission. I think, though, you may confide in my father with perfect safety. After I have told him what you have done for me, and I will make the obligation as strong as possible, he will be disposed to render you any reasonable service in return. He will probably ask you how he can repay you. That will be your opportunity. Tell him about the treasure, and ask him to help you get it. I am pretty sure you will have no cause to regret making him the proposition."

"Your advice seems good, Miss Dent, and I am disposed to follow it. I will speak to Jack about it, as he is as much interested in this treasure as I am," said Joe.

They went on deck, and the boy saw Jack Junk forward and smoking and talking to one of the schooner's crew.

He called him over to one of the masts and then told him that having rendered a service to the captain's daughter, he thought it would be safe to take Captain Dent into their confidence with regard to the treasure, and make a deal with him to go to Thimble Island in the schooner and recover the pirate's gold from the marine cavern.

Jack listened without saying a word, and then slapping Joe on the back, said he was in favor of the idea.

"Seein' as we ain't got no money, we couldn't charter no craft ourselves, so we'd have to make a deal with somebody. If the man wasn't honest, he might trick us out of our own shares altogether, and maybe toss us both overboard to get us out of the way. Such things have been done, my hearty, and will be done again. I reckon we can't do no better than to trust that gal's father. He's an American, at any rate, same as ourselves, and if we agree to pay him well, no doubt he'll stand in with us and then the job will be done, and we can go back to California right away," said Junk.

The matter being thus satisfactorily adjusted between them, Jack returned to Dora's side and impatiently waited for her father to turn up.

Captain Dent returned from Kaka about nine o'clock, and was rather surprised to see his daughter talking to a good-looking young sailor.

Dora introduced Joe to her father, and then told the captain what the boy had done for her that afternoon.

She laid as much stress as she could on Joe's service, saying that but for his timely interposition she really couldn't say what the mate of the *Ceres* bark wouldn't have done to her.

"The rascal!" cried the indignant captain. "He must have been drunk."

He thanked Joe for what he had done for his daughter, and asked him to what vessel he belonged.

The boy told him that he and Jack belonged to no vessel, and were practically stranded in town without a cent.

"Then ship with me," said Captain Dent. "I need a man, and I guess I can find work aboard for both of you."

Before Joe could reply, Dora said:

"Mr. Dent has a proposition to make to you which he regards of great importance. He has confided all the particulars to me, and I think you ought to help him out, for if things turn out as he believes they will, you will make something out of the matter, too."

"I shall be glad to hear your proposition, my lad. If I can square the obligation I feel under to you I will gladly do it," said Captain Dent.

"All right, sir; I'll tell you all about it. You may think that it is only a wild-goose chase my companion and I are on, but I feel sure after you have heard Jack Junk tell what he saw with his own eyes, you will be convinced that there is something in it."

Joe then told him all about the treasure on Thimble Island.

The skipper listened with an air of interest, and when the boy had concluded, asked him what his proposition was.

"To have you take us to the island so that we can take possession of the gold. In return for that service we will give you one-fifth of its value."

"One-fifth, eh?"

"Yes, sir; Jack estimates that there isn't a cent less than \$100,000 in Spanish money there, and he ought to have some idea since he has seen it. If it amounts to that much, your share will be \$20,000. That ought to pay you well, don't you think so?"

"I should say so."

"If there should be more than \$100,000, you'll make a larger amount. Shall I call over Jack, and have him tell you his story? It will be more convincing for you to hear it from him than from me at second hand."

"Call him," said the skipper.

Joe called the sailor aft and introduced him to Captain Dent.

"Now, Jack, the captain wants to hear your experience on Thimble Island. Then he'll decide whether he'll carry us to the island and help us get hold of the gold."

"I've already promised to help you all I can, my lad," said Captain Dent. "I don't think your companion's story will influence me greatly. You have practically given me all the facts yourself, and I am disposed to help you with your scheme."

"Thank you, sir. You will do us the biggest favor that we could receive," replied Joe.

The sailor then told his story, and the skipper listened to him attentively.

When he had concluded, Joe said:

"Now, sir, Jack's yarn might seem too strange to warrant belief, but here is additional evidence that will show that Jack is not the only person who has seen that treasure," and the boy handed the skipper the letter written by the dying Ben Brace in the Sydney hospital.

They adjourned to the cabin so that the captain could read the letter by the lamp there.

"Further evidence as to the truthfulness of Jack's story is the fact that the wreck he tells about was actually towed into Santa Catalina bay by the brig Star of Hope, which is a matter of record. I also helped to take him out of the lazarette of the wreck where he was walled in as he says. He was the worst wreck of a man himself that the hospital authorities ever saw alive, and how they managed to pull

him through will always be a mystery to me. To look at him now you never could believe that he was once a living skeleton—worse than any circus freak. I know it, for I have the evidence of my own eyes to prove it. Then those natives he has spoken about I saw, too, and they are in California at this moment, most of them, and I assure you they were a most surprising lot of natives. There seems no doubt in my mind that the treasure of Thimble Island is an actual fact, and so I hope you will agree to sail there and prove the fact to your satisfaction."

Thus spoke Joe, and his earnestness was convincing.

At any rate, Captain Dent was favorably impressed, and he said that as Thimble Island was not greatly out of the course he would have to take to reach Sydney, where he was bound, he had no objection to calling there and helping Joe and his companion get the treasure if it was there.

"After which you both can't do better than go on to Sydney with me. Then the chances are I shall sail direct from there to San Francisco, so it will be to your interest to stick by the schooner whether you find the treasure or not," said the captain.

To this suggestion Joe and the sailor both agreed, and so the matter was settled.

CHAPTER IX.

A STARTLING SURPRISE.

Joe was not sent forward to roost in the fore-castle with the crew, as there was only one vacant berth there, which was taken possession of by Jack Junk.

The boy was accommodated with a bunk in a small room at the forward end of the cabin.

This room was used to store supplies and various odds and ends, such a spare rope, canvas, and such.

The bunk was filled with stuff that Joe had to toss to one side before he could occupy it, but he didn't find any fault with his cramped surroundings, as he was not likely to spend any more time there than what he needed for rest.

The mate of the schooner turned up next morning, and Joe was introduced to him as an extra hand who would go on watch and stand his trick at the wheel with the rest of the crew.

Joe, however, had this advantage, which he greatly appreciated, as it would throw him in Dora's company; he would eat in the cabin.

The schooner had nearly all her cargo aboard.

All she was waiting for was a consignment from the interior town of Kaka, and this arrived two days later.

During those days the crew had nothing to do, and Joe spent most of his time in Dora's company.

The young people had taken a great fancy to each other, and though the mate frowned upon the growing intimacy between a foremast hand and the skipper's daughter as not in accordance with his ideas of discipline, and went so far as to call the skipper's attention to it, Captain Dent made no effort to nip it in the bud.

He had also taken a liking for the stalwart young lad, and having an idea that he was likely to come into pos-

session of a fortune through the treasure of Thimble Island, in which he put considerable confidence, after hearing the sailor's story, and believing that such a slice of good luck would put an end to his connection with the sea, he considered the boy a suitable companion for his daughter.

The hatches were battened down at last, the anchor raised, the sails hoisted, and the schooner Starlight slowly slipped out of port into the broad Pacific.

Her course, somewhat to the mate's surprise, who was not in the secret, was laid for Thimble Island, and under the light breeze she gradually neared the goal of the hopes of Joe Darcy and his friend, Jack Junk.

"What did I tell you, my hearty?" said Jack, as the schooner slipped through the water. "I said that there cruise in the brig might turn out lucky for us, and you see it has. We're on the way to Thimble Island now, and the treasure is as good as in our possession now."

"Don't crow, Jack, before you're out of the wood," replied Joe. "Several months have passed since you and the natives were carried away from the island, and there's no telling what has happened in the meantime. Somebody else may have got in ahead of us—Bill Herring, for instance."

"I hope not," said Jack. "At any rate, the chances are against him. We'd have had no end of trouble ourselves if luck had not run our way."

"That's true; but he might have gone differently to work about it. For instance, if he managed to interest some man with money to get up an expedition, promising him half of the treasure, his crowd might have reached the island during the interval since you were there, and then——"

"I don't want to think about such a thing. I should tear things up generally if I found that gold gone. Seein' as I've lost five years of my life right in them caverns, almost within touch of the treasure, I should feel like jumpin' into the sea if somebody else had got away with it," said the sailor.

"It would be a pretty rough deal for both of us, for I haven't done much else than think about it since I found that letter, and then heard your story confirming its accuracy," said Joe.

They talked awhile longer, and then Joe was summoned aft to stand a two-hour spell at the wheel.

On the morning of the third day after leaving Tongatabu a cloud-like object was sighted ahead which proved to be Thimble Island.

As soon as Joe heard the announcement he became excited, for his mind was divided between expectation and uncertainty.

He ventured to approach Dora, who had just come on deck.

"Yonder is Thimble Island," he said, pointing ahead. "Before night I shall know whether I'm a rich boy, or that somebody else has got ahead of me."

"Why, who could get ahead of you?" she asked in some surprise.

"The man to whom that letter was sent by Ben Brace—Bill Herring is his name."

"You never told me before that you feared he would deprive you of the treasure," she said.

"Well, I never really thought I had anything to fear from him; but now that the island is actually in sight, I'm obliged to say that I feel nervous."

"I wouldn't worry about the matter," she said, encouragingly. "It is natural that you should feel nervous and excited when nearing the goal of your hopes."

"I should feel all broke up if the gold had disappeared," he said. "I've built so many hopes on it."

"It would certainly be a great disappointment to you," said the girl; "and to your friend as well. Look on the bright side. It seems to me the chances are all in your favor."

Dora was called to breakfast at that moment, and she left Joe with his eager gaze fastened on the island ahead, its thimble-shaped formation becoming each moment more distinct as the schooner bore down on it.

He was presently joined by Jack.

"There's the Thimble rock as plain as the nose on your face, my hearty," said the sailor.

"I see it. The marine caverns are underneath it," replied Jack.

"Yes, close to the water—not much over a dozen feet away from the high-tide mark."

"Puts you in mind of your stay among the natives to see the island again, doesn't it?"

"That's what it does, matey. Seems just like yesterday I was here. See that big palm yonder that's just come into sight near the Thimble?"

"At the foot of it? Yes."

"The wreck was tied to that."

Joe gazed at the tree with interest.

It was wonderful to him to think that a derelict that had been tied there many thousands of miles west of the coast of California should eventually land in Santa Catalina Bay, as sound as when she broke loose from her moorings.

As the moments passed, the schooner drew nearer to the island, and Jack pointed out different landmarks that he remembered.

"There's the banana grove where the natives got their supply of fruit," said Jack, presently. "There's enough of the fruit there to feed an army."

"You mean for one meal."

"There's enough to fill up the hold of several schooners the size of this one, and she's a pretty tidy-sized craft," said Jack.

"And it all goes to waste."

"Of course, when there ain't nobody to eat it."

Joe was now called to his breakfast, as the skipper and his daughter were done, but he was so excited at the prospect ahead that he had very little appetite for it.

When Captain Dent came on deck he gave orders to his mate to bring the schooner to as close to the island as he thought prudent.

"Do you intend to go ashore there, sir?" asked the officer in some surprise.

"I do."

The mate was somewhat curious to learn the reason, but as the skipper did not volunteer any information, he did not feel that it was his place to ask any questions on the subject.

The schooner lay to about half a mile from shore.

Captain Dent ordered one of his two boats into the

water, and Joe and Jack Junk were directed to get into it. Dora was running up out of the cabin with her hat on.

"May I go, too, father?" she asked, eagerly, as the skipper was in the act of taking his place in the stern sheets.

"Well," said her father, smilingly, "I suppose there is no harm in your accompanying us if you want to."

He handed her into the boat, and then ordered Junk to shove off.

Joe and Jack bent to the oars with a vim, their breasts heaving with suppressed excitement.

Their backs were toward the island as they rowed, but their hearts and minds were projected ahead.

The skipper headed for the little cove at the foot of Thimble rock, and he and Dora could already make out the dark opening that afforded entrance to the marine caves Jack Junk has spoken about, and in which he had been kept a prisoner for five years.

If Captain Dent ever had any doubts as to the accuracy of the sailor's yarn, they were put to flight by the confirmatory evidences that his eyes now rested upon, showing beyond any reasonable doubt that Junk had been here before.

"Cease rowing," ordered the captain at last.

Joe and Jack stopped pulling and allowed their oars to rest on a level with the gunwhale.

"Take in your oars, my lads. We are close in and under sufficient headway," said Captain Dent.

Their oars rattled on the seats, and Joe and Jack turned to look at the island.

The boat was darting into the cove, and high above the heads of the party rose Thimble rock, smooth around the base, and then corrugated and full of holes from there up.

Nothing in nature could have more closely resembled a gigantic thimble.

"Isn't it wonderful!" exclaimed Dora. "It looks just like a real thimble, only tremendously big."

"Yes, like a thimble with a piece broken out of the part where it goes on one's finger," said Joe.

"That's the entrance to the marine caves, isn't it?" she said, her eyes sparkling with almost as much anticipation as Joe's.

"Yes, miss," replied the sailor. "I ought to remember that there doorway well, seein' as I was marched in and out of it often enough by them natives. They never once trusted me alone. Just as if I could have got away when there wasn't a boat nowhere at hand for me to get afloat in. Even if there had been, I wasn't fool enough to think of facing slow starvation on the chance of bein' picked up on the wide ocean."

The boat shot up on the sand a foot or two and Joe was the first to land.

The captain and Dora followed, leaving Jack to secure the boat.

Joe had hardly advanced more than a yard when he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Look! Look!" he cried, pointing. "There's a box full of money upset on the sand near the entrance to the cave."

All looked at the spot and saw the astonishing sight.

The box lay on its side, without a cover, and from it flowed a flood of glittering yellow coin, like a frozen golden stream.

"My gracious! What a lot of money!" exclaimed Dora. To Jack, however, the presence of that golden heap was somewhat disquieting.

It had not been there when he left the island on his involuntary cruise on the wreck with the native residents, therefore it indicated that somebody else had been here since—was there yet, in all probability.

Who could that person, or persons, be?

Bill Herring or some shipwrecked sailors.

The latter inference seemed probable, since there was no other craft than the schooner anchored anywhere in sight.

That didn't say that there might not be a vessel off the southeastern shore, for owing to the hilly character of the island they could not see completely across it.

But a greater surprise was in store for them all, especially for Joe Darcy.

It came with a suddenness that quite took their breath away.

While Joe stood looking at the overturned box of gold coins, a lasso flew out of the cave, and the noose tightened around his body.

The next instant he was dragged into the dark opening. His friends uttered cries of alarm.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE CAVERNS UNDER THE THIMBLE.

Joe was never more astonished in his life, nor more taken by surprise than when he felt himself yanked off his feet with unpleasant suddenness, and dragged out of the bright sunlight into the gloomy recesses of the base of Thimble rock.

He grabbed the rope and tried to stay his progress by digging his heels into the sandy floor of the narrow passage through which he was being drawn; but his efforts were vain.

He was pulled onward, deeper into the recesses of Thimble rock, until he found that the passage had widened into a cave.

Who ever had made him a prisoner did not stop there, but hauled him into still another passage that led downward in a turning way.

All was dark around him—pitch dark, and his body was growing sore from the bumps it was getting.

He shouted to his captor, asking the meaning of this strange and outrageous treatment.

He might as well have held his peace, for no attention was paid to his protestations.

He was dragged into another cavern.

At least he judged so, for he was no longer bumped against the stone walls at imminent danger of cracking his skull against some projecting stone.

Here he was pulled over a smooth, hard and level surface, just as if he was a bag of merchandise, and had no feeling.

The gloom here seemed less intense, whether because his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, or from some other cause.

A pale, soft light seemed to be reflected upward against the roof.

Joe was in no mood or position to ponder over this fact, as his progress forward was still unchecked.

However, he soon saw that he was passing under an archway into a still lighter cavern.

The light here was undulating, like the rippling surface of the sea, and was of a distinctly greenish tinge.

Finally he was drawn through another short passage into still another cavern of ample dimensions.

Its low, flattened roof was glorious with a lovely, ever-changing pattern, formed by the reflection of the sunlight from the waves outside.

He was so fascinated by the appearance of the roof, which seemed to be all in motion—lights and shadows, soft as silken weavings, chasing each other, opening, closing and interlacing in the most wonderful way, till he grew dazzled—that he failed to notice that he had come to a rest.

When he did become conscious of the fact he rolled over and looked to see who the person was who had taken him prisoner.

He looked in vain. The man, if men he was, had vanished in a most mysterious way.

He sat up and wheeled all the way around, but though his eyes took in every corner of the place, there was not a soul in the curiously lighted marine cavern but himself.

"Where in thunder has he gone to?" Joe asked himself, wonderingly.

He rose to his feet without difficulty and saw the lariat trailing off on the sand like a thin, sinuous, lengthy snake.

He pulled it to him, unloosened the loop that was tightly drawn under his armpits and released himself from it.

"What in thunder is the meaning of all this?" he cried. "Here I've been hauled down into these caverns, which seem just above the level of the sea, and left here to shift for myself. I must get back to the surface as fast as I can go. Jack and the skipper and Dora must have had a fit when they saw me disappear in such an unceremonious way into that yawning black hole. I dare say Jack will be after me, for he knows the way in this place, and I shall meet him on the way out."

As Joe had no doubt about returning the way he came, notwithstanding the darkness of the inner and upper passages and caves, he did not hasten his steps, for he was quite taken with the peculiar cavern in which he had come to a stop in.

He could not understand how the place was illuminated in such an indescribable way.

That it was a reflection of the sun on the water he was sure, but whence came it?

He could see no opening, and surely openings there must be to enable the light from without to enter, since it was not possible for it to penetrate solid rock.

"This is a truly wonderful cavern. It is really worth the experience I went through to see. How delightful Dora will be when I bring her down here!"

He walked around it, trying to find the opening that admitted the light, but was not successful in his search.

Everywhere the place was carpeted with soft sand, through which stood up smooth blocks with flattened tops,

readily suggesting tables, chairs and couches of the hardest and most durable nature.

The only opening in the place was the one through which he had been dragged.

After a last lingering look at the moving ceiling of the low cavern, he started back to rejoin his friends.

"The chap who pulled me down here on y worked a fool trick. What could have been his object? What has it amounted to? Nothing but subjecting me to a lot of inconvenience, and making my bones ache. I don't see anything funny in that even if he did."

He now re-entered the cavern lit by the soft, greenish light.

He walked across it in the direction he thought the passage beyond was, but found himself facing a solid stone wall.

He followed the wall till he came back to the entrance to the other passage.

"Where in creation is that opening, anyway? Must be the other way," he said.

So he kept on walking with one hand on the wall, but no passageway appeared.

He was greatly puzzled, but kept on till he once more reached the passage leading back into the cavern of the wavering lights he had left.

"Where is the entrance to this place that fellow pulled me through? Blessed if I can find it. It was a kind of archway, but I don't see any archway here."

Thus mused Joe as he started on a fresh survey of the cavern.

He examined every crevice and cranny inward, fully expecting to find some low arch leading into a dark passage, but he failed to find an opening of any kind.

There must be two passages out of the lighted cavern, and I've taken the wrong one, and yet I'll swear this is the green tinted one I was in before, unless there are two alike," thought the boy.

He went back through to the big lighted cavern and looked for another passage out of it; but there was only the one leading into the green-hued cave.

Joe now began to feel somewhat alarmed.

The sensation of being buried alive under the rock oppressed him.

He rushed back into the inner cave and made another desperate hunt for the way out.

He was no more successful than before.

"There's some hocus-pocus in all this," he said, scratching his head. "Certainly I wasn't dragged through that stone wall. My recollection is of a dark passage beyond with an archway into this place. Now there is no archway and no evidence of the passage at all. There must be some secret to this cave. If there is, I'm up against it hard. What the dickens shall I do? If that chap dragged me here to leave me in a living tomb, I suppose I shall starve to death."

He returned to the lighted cavern and sat down disconsolately on the sand.

He was no longer interested in the incomparable, ever-changing beauties of the ceiling. All he could think about now was the immediate future, and what his fate was to be.

How long he sat there, the picture of dejection, he never afterward remembered.

It was some time, however, and while that time passed away his friends above were hunting for him.

Hardly had Joe been dragged into the cavern than Jack, recovering from his surprise, started after him to find out the meaning of the strange happening.

He followed the same course that Joe was being dragged, and heard the boy's voice ahead, but he couldn't overtake him, as he had to proceed cautiously, knowing from experience that pieces of rock hung down from the ceiling in places, which he could not see owing to the darkness.

Dora and her father awaited his return with Joe, whom they confidently expected he would bring back.

They amused themselves handling the gold coins, and speculating on the probable volume of what was still in the box, together with the spilled portion on the sand.

With Dora's help the captain righted the box, and then both started to return the loose gold back into it.

"There's a small fortune here, without talking about the rest, if there is any more, as I judge there must be from Junk's statement," said Captain Dent.

"How much do you think it is worth?" asked Dora.

"Forty or fifty thousand dollars, I should imagine."

"Joe will be entitled to \$20,000 of that. That will make him quite well off. If they give you a fifth, as they promised, you will make \$10,000 with very little trouble. It was lucky we met them at Tongatabu," said the girl.

The skipper agreed with her.

The sum of \$10,000 was more than he could make out of several voyages.

The captain stepped to the boat to see where the box of gold could be best placed aboard of it.

Hardly was his back turned than Dora uttered a thrilling scream.

Captain Dent sprang around just in time to see her vanish into the opening, clasped in the arms of a ragged looking object, whose identity he could not distinguish.

CHAPTER XI.

COMPANIONS IN MISFORTUNE

With an exclamation of consternation, Captain Dent dashed after his screaming daughter.

Her cries soon ceased, while he rushed on in the direction whence they had come.

All was dense darkness, but he pushed ahead regardless of anything.

As a consequence, his head came in contact with a rock with such force that he dropped senseless in his tracks, and there he was found by Jack Junk, who tumbled over him as he was returning from his unsuccessful hunt for Joe.

The sailor, after exploring all the passages and caves with which he was familiar, as well as he could in the darkness, decided that a more extended hunt would have to be prosecuted with lantern light.

He began to suspect that, though he had spent five years

in that place, there were other caverns into which he had never been introduced by the natives.

He was right, for he had never been in the green-tinted cave, nor the wonderfully illuminated one where Joe was a prisoner at that moment.

When he fell over the unconscious body of Captain Dent his first impression was that he had come upon Joe, after all.

He soon made out that he hadn't, and the next moment discovered that it was the skipper.

He felt blood on his forehead, so he was at no loss to understand how Captain Dent came to be in the condition he had found him.

Lifting the skipper in his arms he bore him out into the sunlight.

He looked around for Dora, but she was gone, and that was another surprise to him, for he couldn't imagine where she had gone to.

"Maybe she's strayed away behind them trees to take a look at the island," he thought. "She'll be back in a moment or two."

He carried the captain down to the water and began bathing his head.

In a few moments the skipper opened his eyes and looked around in a dazed way.

Then his thoughts collected themselves.

"Dora, have you got her?" he cried.

"Me got her? What d'ye mean, cap'n? She's somewhere around here, ain't she?"

"No, no," cried Captain Dent, getting on his feet and speaking with feverish eagerness. "She was carried off into the entrance, and through the passage beyond, just like Joe. I must follow and save her."

"Hold on, cap'n. You can't go without a light. You'll get another knock like the clip that laid you out. The ceiling of that there passage is full of projections. A man can't walk upright in it nohow."

"But my daughter—I can't desert her. Some scoundrel has carried her down into those caves."

"We must return to the schooner for lanterns and some of the crew to help us tackle the chap or chaps who are in possession of the secrets of the caverns. We had better provide ourselves with weapons, too, for there's no tellin' what we may run up against."

The captain was averse to leaving his child on the island, but was finally overruled by the sailor's logic.

So they pushed off for the schooner after Jack had taken the precaution to shove the box of gold coins out of sight into the shrubbery close at hand.

In the meantime, how fared matters with Joe?

He had grown tired of sitting in the sand, and had started to see if there was some exit from the big cave.

He argued that there must be, since the person who had dragged him in there had not returned by way of the passage.

Had he done so the boy would have seen him pass in that direction.

He had vanished some other way, and as it wasn't possible for a human being to pass through a wall of solid rock, of course it was reasonable to conclude that there was another exit from the place.

Therefore Joe hunted for this avenue of escape.

Although he had looked the cavern over pretty well before, and seen no opening, he was, nevertheless, confident that there must be an opening, probably a very narrow one, which had escaped his casual survey.

He had reached the far end of the cavern when he thought he heard a faint succession of sounds behind him.

He turned quickly and caught sight of a shadow vanishing into the passage.

He dashed after it, for he was a plucky lad, but had hardly traversed half of the cavern before he came to a stop with an exclamation of profound amazement.

Stretched upon one of the stone couches, if they could so be called, he beheld the unconscious form of Dora Dent.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Joe. "Dora here! I saw a shadow steal off through that passage. Must have been the person who brought her in here. How could he have got hold of her with her father to protect her? I suppose that's the same rascal who lassoed me. Now we're both prisoners—she and I. This is getting to be pretty serious. Maybe we'll have Jack in here next. No, I hardly think so. He is too tough a proposition to be handled with impunity."

At that juncture Dora opened her eyes and sat up.

"Why, where am I?" she said, looking around her in wonderment. "Is that you, Joe?" she asked as her eyes rested on him.

"Yes, Miss Dora. How came you to be here? Who brought you down into this cavern?"

The girl shuddered and hid her face in her hands.

"I don't know whether he was a man or an animal," she said, looking up. "His face was so hairy that he hardly looked like a human being; but he was half clothed in ragged garments, so I suppose he must have been a man."

"I guess he was a man, all right; probably the same chap who captured me with the lariat, and dragged me all the way here on my back. He may be some shipwrecked sailor who has gone out of his head. At any rate, his actions are very curious, for I can't see what he expects to gain by such business. Your father will pull these underground passages to pieces to find you, and it will go hard with any one who tries to oppose him," said Joe.

Dora, after briefly explaining how she had been seized off her guard by the hard looking object, and carried into the passage, screaming, said she had lost her senses through fright on finding herself being borne along under ground, and remembered nothing more till she came to in Joe's presence.

She then asked the boy to tell his experience, which he did.

The worst of it, I couldn't find the way out after the fellow left me. I have hunted for the archway through which I remember being dragged, but the place appeared to have vanished, as if it had been walled up. I was just trying to find another exit when you were brought in here. Come, we will look for it together."

He took her by the hand.

"Isn't this a wonderful place? Where does that light come from?" she asked, pointing at the ceiling.

"Blessed if I can tell," replied Joe. "It seems to be the reflection of the sunlight, so I conclude there must be a hole of some extent here somewhere."

Dora watched the changing sunlight in a kind of entranced way.

"That must be the water in motion, and the sunlight shining through it, or on it," she said. "I never saw anything half as beautiful as that before."

"Come, Miss Dora; we are wasting time," said Joe, whose thoughts were centered on escaping from the marine cavern. "Some of the most beautiful things in this world are the most dangerous."

He led her over to the extreme end of the cavern and looked for a crevice in the wall wide enough for them to pass through.

There was none there; but right over their heads he could make out a long slit in the top of the rock just under the ceiling.

It was several inches wide, and through it the light came.

They could hear the splashing of the wavelets against the rocky barrier beyond, and that told them there was an opening on the sea beyond their sight.

"There's no escape for us in this direction," said Joe.

"What shall we do? There must be a way of getting out, since we both got in here," she said.

"That's common sense, but just the same we can't find it."

He took her into the cavern with the green reflection on the ceiling.

"The entrance is somewhere here," he said; "but the person who brought me here must have means for stopping it up, for you see there isn't a sign of any exit."

The gloominess of this cavern rather depressed their spirits, so they returned to the larger one.

The light didn't seem as bright as it was before, while the reflection had assumed a greenish tinge.

This was due to the rising of the tide, but neither Joe nor his fair companion suspected the cause of it.

They sat down on the sand and watched the fading of the bright colors on the ceiling until the waverings assumed the same pale green hue as that of the other cavern.

Had they returned to the other cavern they would have found it dark, for the shivering green tint had departed from it.

Dora laid her head on Joe's shoulder and began to cry softly.

She was frightened at their situation, which tried even the lad's plucky nature.

The silence, the sense of entombment, and the general mystery surrounding their prison in the foundation of Thimble rock, all conspired to depress their minds.

Joe would have felt much worse had he been alone, but he found a kind of melancholy relief in trying to cheer the girl up.

He spoke to her encouragingly about the certainty of their ultimate escape through the efforts of her father and the schooner's crew, who would surely leave not a stone unturned in their efforts to find them both.

Finally between the heat and the gloom and the silence they went to sleep.

About four hours later Joe woke up and at his feet he found a bunch of ripe bananas and a vessel filled with water.

That showed the cavern had been visited by their captor while they slept.

Clearly, slow starvation was not part of the programme.

Joe was hungry, and he ate several of the bananas with great relish, and washed them down with a drink of water, which was cool and invigorating.

His courage returned, and he waited for Dora to wake up.

He did not wish to disturb her, for forgetfulness was a boon to her under the circumstances.

A deeper gloom than ever enshrouded the cavern, and Joe wondered what caused the change from the brilliant dancing reflection of the sunlight.

At length the true reason, the rising of the tide outside, occurred to him.

When the sea fell again the sunshine would return, but it would then be late in the afternoon.

They ought to be rescued before that.

It would be mighty funny if the whole crew of the schooner couldn't find them before that, with Jack and the captain to spur them on.

So he sat there and thought as the moments fled by.

CHAPTER XII.

TWO HEARTS THAT BEAT AS ONE.

Dora woke up presently and seemed frightened to find herself still in the underground caverns.

Joe calmed her apprehensions somewhat, and pointing to the bananas and water, asked her if she didn't want some.

"Where did they come from?" she asked in surprise.

"I found them there when I woke up, so, of course, the party that brought us here brought them, too," replied Joe.

Dora was too anxious to feel much like eating, but the boy prevailed on her to sample the fruit, and she liked it so well that she ate two.

"How long have we been asleep?" she asked. "It looks almost as if it was night."

"Oh, I guess it is hardly more than mid-day, if it's as late as that," replied Joe. "The tide is up and that is why the light is shut off."

"But father ought to have found us before this," she said.

Joe thought so himself, but he didn't say so.

He was sure several hours had passed since their capture, and unless something unusual had happened, surely they ought to have been found long since.

It began to dawn on the boy's mind that the two caverns to which they were confined were different ones than those Jack had been held in.

The sailor had never spoken about the wonderful illumination of this cave, as it seemed to Joe he surely would have done had he ever visited it when the tide was low.

If he did not know of the existence of the place, which appeared to be shut off from the main passage in some mysterious way, why, naturally, he could not point out the

way to it, but would guide the searching party to those caverns he was familiar with.

Clearly the base of Thimble rock reappeared to be honey-combed with caverns and passages.

The more Joe considered their situation the more serious he considered it.

He comforted himself with the reflection that Captain Dent would not desist from his exploration of the rock until he had found them.

"When we are not discovered in the main caverns he will naturally conclude that there are other caves somewhere about, and will make a strenuous effort to locate them," thought the boy. "That should lead to our escape."

"If you were not with me, I don't know what I should do," said Dora.

"It would be pretty hard on you to be here alone," he replied.

"Dreadful!" she exclaimed with a shudder, drawing closer to him.

In his sympathy for her he encircled her waist with his arm, and she did not object to this little familiarity.

"Well, don't worry, I will look out for you and help you all I can," he said. "I won't let anything happen to you as long as I am able to stand up in your defence. I have grown to like you a great deal, Dora, and we will always be friends, won't we?"

"Yes."

"Then you like me a little, too?"

"I like you very, very much," she replied.

"How much is that?" he said, drawing her unresistingly toward him. "Won't you tell me? I more than like you, Dora. I have learned to care for you more than any one in the world. More even than if you were my sister. Do you know what that means? Do you know that I would die before I would allow the least harm to come to you? Yes, Dora, I love you very dearly. Will you ever learn to care for me that way?"

He drew her still closer, and felt her tremble in his grasp.

Her head was bent down, and she made no reply.

Holding her that way a moment or two, he gently lifted her face and looked down into her eyes in the gloom of the place.

He knew they were beautiful blue ones, with long, silken lashes, though he could not now make their color out.

He pressed her golden head on his shoulder, and then unable to resist the temptation thus offered to him, kissed her exquisitely formed lips.

Uttering a little cry, she turned her head and buried it on his shoulder.

With a thrill of joy he held her fast for many minutes, then he said softly:

"Look up, Dora. Do you love me as I love you?"

For a moment she did not move.

Then as his lips fanned her nut-brown cheek, she turned her face up and said:

"Yes, Joe, I love you very dearly, with all my heart."

Their lips met this time in a sweet, lingering kiss, and both were never so happy in their lives before, in spite of their uncertain and peculiar situation.

They sat there very quiet for a long time, his arms

thrown protectingly around her, and hers encircling the neck of her boy lover.

Their thoughts were centered entirely in each other.

Suddenly Joe's eyes were attracted to the far end of the cavern.

It struck him he saw something in motion there.

He looked, his senses all at once on the alert, and he saw a small narrow opening appear in the wall of rock.

A shadowy figure entered bearing what seemed to be a box in his arms.

He placed his burden on one of the smooth stones scattered around the cavern and retired without closing the aperture.

In a few moments he returned with a second box, which he placed beside the first.

Presently he came back with a third box, and then a fourth and fifth.

Joe observed the object carefully and saw that it was a wild looking man, with a hairy face, long hair, and dressed in rags.

Having placed the fifth box beside the others, the strange being advanced with a cat-like tread toward the spot where Joe sat clasping the girl in his arms.

In a fraction of a minute the boy made up his mind to attack this man and overcome him if the thing were possible.

He gradually released his hold of Dora so as to free his arms for action, and was gathering his energies for a spring when the girl sat up and uttered a cry:

"Joe, Joe, there it is—the——" pointing her arm at the approaching figure.

The intruder turned like a flash, darted for the end of the cave, and was gone before Joe could get on his feet.

Joe rushed over to see if he could find the place through which he had vanished, but he couldn't.

"There's a secret entrance here," he said to himself. "If I only had some matches I might make it out."

He had no matches, so he had to give it up.

Then he walked over to the boxes and looked into them.

He was astonished to find that they were full of gold coins.

"Come here, Dora, and look at all this money," he said.

She went over and gazed in wonder at the five boxes full of it.

It is true that the boxes were not large ones, but they held \$20,000 each easily enough.

"That is evidently a portion of the treasure, of which the box full we saw at the entrance was a sample," said Joe. "If we only could make our escape we'd soon bring Jack and some of the men here and get these boxes aboard of the schooner."

"Don't you know where that man came in?" asked the girl.

"He came in through a secret entrance which I can't make out. If we had a light here we might find it. It must have been very cunningly contrived by some one—possibly the pirates who are supposed to have used the caverns as a hidden rendezvous."

"The appearance of that man makes me nervous," said Dora.

"Don't be afraid. I'll protect you," said Joe, reassuringly.

"But if we had been asleep he might have taken me away to some other place. He was coming right up to us."

"We were both asleep when he brought the fruit and water, and he did not touch you," replied the boy.

That fact pacified Dora.

After looking at the money for awhile, and figuring on how much it amounted to, they sat down again in the old spot and passed away the time in building air castles for the future.

They ate more of the bananas, and soon afterward the cavern began to grow light again as the tide slowly ebbed.

An hour more elapsed and the bright reflections of the sun-kissed waves commenced to shine at the far end of the ceiling, rapidly advancing till the entire ceiling was aglow again as they had first seen it.

They hadn't heard the faintest sound to indicate that the rescuers they were looking for were anywhere near them.

They might have been in some passage close at hand, but their presence was hidden by the stone wall of the cavern.

Joe was growing impatient over the delay.

He was satisfied that he had been in the cave over eight hours, and Dora nearly as long.

Neither of them had any desire to spend the coming night there.

Joe felt that something must be done, and yet he didn't know what he could do.

He wished he could see over the top of the wall where the narrow crevice admitted the brilliant light.

He was sure that from there he would be able to catch sight of the sea.

Yet the crevice appeared to be too narrow for him to see over, even if he could haul himself up to it.

The ceiling ran flush with the top of it, and would not permit of his head rising high enough to bring his eyes on a level with it.

However, he determined to try, so he got up, and running over, gave a spring up and caught the smooth top with his fingers.

His weight came against the wall with some force.

A small section of it gave way, like a door turning outward, and he disappeared from Dora's sight, still hanging to the ledge of the section.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILL HERRING.

Dora started up in alarm, feeling sure that something terrible had happened to him.

Then she heard him give a shout, and presently he reappeared in the crevice, which admitted a narrow flood of light.

"Quick, Dora, come!" he called to her.

She ran toward him and he dragged her through a short narrow passage into a small cave opening on the sea.

Dora clasped her hands with joy.

"We are saved!" she cried.

"Not quite; but thank goodness we are no longer cooped up in that cavern."

The cave faced upon the sparkling sea, but not in the direction of the schooner which was now anchored close in shore.

The water, however, half filled the entrance at that moment, and ran up the steep floor of sand.

The top and sides of the arch were covered with glistening green seaweed, hanging all around like lace, and presented a beautiful effect.

The mouth of the place was protected by twin barriers of rock that rose out of sight, and were too smooth for climbing.

Joe saw that it would be necessary to swim out beyond these projections before he could discover the position of the schooner.

"It's funny how such a place as this was formed," said Dora.

Not half as surprising as the way caverns and passages were brought into existence by nature," he answered. "This cave was doubtless scooped out by the ceaseless action of the sea."

"What a lot of beautiful shells are lying about. I must have some."

"Not now. We have got to escape first. Then we can come here in a boat and carry off that money, and as many shells as you want."

"How are we to escape?" asked Dora, realizing for the first time that they had merely changed an inner prison for an outer and more glorious one.

"I can swim out and take a look for the schooner," said Joe.

"Isn't there some other way? That hairy man came here from some place."

"That's right. Let's see if we can find his tracks."

They looked about the cave and soon saw a dark hole leading off somewhere.

Dora hung back as Joe started to enter it.

"I don't like to go in there," she said.

"Then wait here while I explore the place," he said.

"Something might happen to you," she said, laying her hand caressingly on his arm.

"You wouldn't like that, would you?" he said, smilingly.

"You know I wouldn't, dear," she replied, putting one arm around his neck.

"Well, something has got to be done," said Joe, resolutely. "We can't stop here after it grows dark, for the place will fill up with water at next high tide. Neither do we want to return to the cavern inside and be cooped up again. You wait here, and let me see if I can't find a way out for us."

Reluctantly she yielded to his wishes, and followed his figure with her eyes till it was lost in the darkness of the hole.

Joe proceeded through the hole, which was just wide enough for him to pass through on his hands and knees, for some distance before it ended in a small cave.

The cave was dimly lighted by a crevice that ran out through the rock to a point many feet above the sea.

It faced to the west, for a shaft of sunlight from the

descending luminary shot through the crevice and shone on the inner wall of the cave.

Joe looked around the place and saw the hairy man stretched out on a rude pallet asleep.

In one corner of the cave stood two chests.

When Joe's eyes rested on them he judged that they were the receptacles that had held all the gold Jack had referred to in his story.

This, then, must be the inner cave to which the native in the plug hat led Jack to let him feast his eyes on the treasure trove.

Joe wondered how much money was still in the chests.

He didn't care to take the time or the chances of investigating now.

He looked for an exit from the cave other than the hole through which he had entered—the way by which Jack had been brought there.

He saw an opening behind the sleeper.

With great caution he made his way to it and found a passage ahead.

He hurried forward to see where it led to.

It was densely dark, but he did not care for that.

Suddenly he came up against an obstruction.

Feeling around he found that it was a huge pile of debris that seemed to have fallen in from the roof.

It did not take him long to conclude that the road was blocked here, and that he had no choice but to return the way he came.

He turned around and retraced his steps.

When he reached the cave where he had left the hairy man he found him gone.

He thought of Dora being suddenly confronted by that hideous being, and he started back through the hole.

He had gone but a short distance before he heard her shrill scream.

He hurried forward as fast as he could to her rescue, his heart beating furiously at the thought of what she was up against, and he upbraided himself for having left her.

It seemed an age before he regained the opening into the outer cave, during which time she had screamed several times again.

Then she ceased and he trembled at the issue.

When he thrust his head out of the hole the cave was empty—both Dora and the hairy man had vanished.

Joe knew that the man must have carried her into the inner cavern, as there was seemingly no other place where he could have gone.

He had no difficulty in finding the movable slab, as it was distinguished on that side by a shallow hole large enough for the hand to secure a grip on to pull with.

Before Joe could insert his finger the slab was pushed open in his face and the hairy man came out and confronted him.

"Who are you?" demanded the boy, "and why have you made prisoners of the girl and me?"

"I am the king of the island, he, he, he!" returned the hairy man, with a grin. "I'm worth a million in gold. I need somebody to keep me company and be my subjects when the vessel is gone away. You two will do, so I'm going to keep you. Keep you prisoners till the vessel sails and then let you out, he, he, he!"

"What's your name?"

"My name? Bill Herring. I own the island—I own a million in gold—I own you, too, and the gal. By and by I'll own the earth, he, he, he!"

"So you're Bill Herring? How long have you been here?"

"How long?"

The man seemed to be trying to think.

Then he shook his head.

"Don't know. I've been here always, I guess. I'm king of the island, and worth a million in gold. I'm the greatest man in the world. Now I've got two subjects, I won't be lonesome any more. Maybe I'll marry the girl and make her queen of the island. Why didn't I think of that before? It is just the thing. Now go in and keep her company till the vessel sails away."

He stepped toward Joe with the evident intention of forcing the boy to do his bidding.

The young sailor decided that this was the best chance he might have to settle matters with their captor.

So the moment the deranged Bill Herring came within reach he raised his fist and smashed him in the jaw with such force that the hairy man fell back on the sand.

If Joe, for the moment, imagined the victory won, he was soon undeceived.

The crazy inhabitant of Thimble rock was on his feet in a moment.

With a howl he sprang at the boy, and the two grappled.

The wild man lifted him off his feet and flung him on the sand.

Then he seized a big stone and raised it above the boy's head with the evident purpose of crushing him.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

At that thrilling moment in Joe's career, Dora suddenly appeared at the aperture in the wall.

She saw her young lover's danger, and with a scream she threw herself on the crazy hairy man and grabbed one of his raised arms.

The shock caused the stone to drop at his feet instead of on the boy's head.

The girl's interposition gave Joe time to recover himself.

His experience having proved that he was no match for the lunatic, he seized the stone and flung it against the man's head just as he, with a cry of wrath, seized Dora.

The blow took effect, and he fell, stunned, dragging the girl down with him.

Joe helped her up.

"You saved my life, Dora," he said, throwing his arms around her and kissing her.

She sobbed hysterically on his breast, but he soothed her in a few minutes.

"There, there, I'm all right. Now this chap must be secured before he recovers. He's as strong as an ox, and

would doubtless kill us if he got the chance. I must get the lariat inside and tie him."

Joe darted into the inner cavern, picked up the lasso where he had cast it down on the sand when first left in the cave, and hastened back.

He put the noose over Herring's head and drew it tight around his arms and body.

He wound the whole length of it around his limbs and tied it, so that the man was now quite helpless, and they had nothing more to fear from him.

By that time the sun was low down on the distant horizon.

"Dora, I see no way of our escaping from here but for me to swim out and try to reach the schooner. Now that our enemy is no longer able to do any injury, you won't mind staying here till I come back with a boat and your father. It won't take me more than half an hour at the outside. I'll drag that chap inside out of your sight, and you can sit here and wait for us. There is no danger, for the tide is going out, as you see, and it won't rise for some hours."

Dora agreed to do as Joe suggested, and after a fond embrace and several kisses, Joe waded down the slope till the water rose above his waist, then he struck out for the point of the projecting ledge on his left.

Reaching it he found temporary foothold there so that he could rise up and get a view of the surrounding water.

He saw the schooner anchored not far off the island, with her sails furled.

He shouted back the intelligence to Dora, and then sinking into the water again, was soon lost to her sight around the ledge.

Joe followed the contour of Thimble rock and soon came in sight of the cove, where they had landed.

Two boats were there now, and one sailor standing on the shore.

The sailor gave a shout when he saw him and ran to meet him.

"Where's the cap'n?" asked Joe.

"In the caves with most of the crew. They's been digging for hours through a mass of earth and rocks that fell and blocked up one of the passages where you and the skipper's daughter were supposed to be imprisoned. Where did you come from, and do you know anything about the girl?"

"I came from a marine cavern on the other side of the rock, where I left the young lady safe, and waiting for me to go back with a boat to take her off. I'll take one of the boats and go after her while you go down into the caves and tell the cap'n that his daughter is all right, and there is no need of doing any more digging."

The sailor hastened away, and then Joe sprang into the smaller of the two boats and put off for the cavern.

He soon came in sight of it and saw Dora with her gaze seaward watching for him.

As soon as she saw him she sprang up and ran down to the receding water's edge.

It didn't take him long to reach and take her into the boat.

"Where is my father?" was her first question.

"Down in the caverns trying to find us. He'll be out by the time I get you around to the cove."

Captain Dent, with a grateful heart, was waiting for Joe to return with his daughter.

As soon as the boy reached the boat, Dora sprang into her father's arms.

Jack and the crew welcomed Joe vociferously.

"How did you escape, Joe?" asked Junk. "I didn't know there was an exit in that direction."

While Dora was telling her day's experience to her father, Joe explained to Jack and the other sailors what he and the girl had been through.

Jack was astonished to learn of the three caverns leading to the sea.

"So that chap who stole you two was Bill Herring, and you say he's crazy?" he said.

"Yes, he's as crazy as he can be. He's in one of the caverns tied so tight he can't get free till somebody goes to his aid."

"The way to the cave where the balance of the treasure lies is blocked up," said Jack. "That's where we've been digging for most of the day. I suppose the skipper will be willin' to finish the job to-morrow in order to get at the money."

"It isn't necessary. I know another way of reaching the cave where the two chests are."

"Is that so?" said Jack.

"Yes. Most, if not all, the gold has been taken from them by Bill Herring. There are five small boxes full in the cavern where Miss Dent and I put in most of our time to-day," said Joe.

"Good!" cried Jack, in a tone of great satisfaction.

Captain Dent now ordered all hands into the boats, and they were presently on their way back to the schooner, which had been left in charge of the mate and the cook.

Next morning the captain, Joe, Jack and two other sailors went to the marine cavern, found the tide out, and landed.

Bill Herring was carried above to the schooner and fed, but proved so unmanagable that nothing could be done with him.

There was no available place aboard in which to confine him, so after the treasure had been removed to the cabin he was taken ashore and turned loose.

The schooner then left en route for Sydney, where she arrived in good time.

Here during her stay Captain Dent disposed of the Spanish gold for bills of exchange on a San Francisco bank, the total sum footing up \$150,000, of which his share amounted to \$30,000.

He decided that he would give up the sea and settle down ashore, as he now had enough money to spend the rest of his life in comfort with his daughter.

Joe and Jack each received a draft for \$60,000.

The schooner took aboard a cargo for San Francisco and sailed for that port.

Long before she arrived there Dora had told her father that Joe was the dearest boy in all the world, and she had made up her mind to marry him.

Captain Dent offered no objection to her choice.

He gave his consent.

On reaching San Francisco, the captain, Joe and Jack made up a handsome purse and presented it to the mate

and sailors of the schooner for their help in securing the treasure of Thimble Island.

One morning not long afterward, Joe and Jack, arrayed in swell clothes, stepped out of the stage which had brought them to Santa Catalina from the railroad station.

They themselves were so altered as to pass along the streets without recognition.

Reaching the water front, they headed for the junk shop of Phelim Darcy.

Entering, they found Mr. Darcy in his office, while two new assistants were around to wait on customers.

"Hello, uncle!" cried Joe, walking into the office.

Phelim Darcy jumped out of the chair as if he had been propelled by a spring.

"Joe, is it really you?" he exclaimed. "Why, it was supposed you and Junk had drifted out to sea and were lost."

"We did drift out to sea, but we weren't lost by any means. We were picked up by an outward-bound brig and carried to the South Seas," said Joe.

"Where is Junk?"

"Outside. Come in, Jack," said the boy, going to the door.

The junk dealer nearly had a fit when he saw the sailor's dandified appearance.

"You two appear to have struck luck," he said.

"Nothing surer, uncle. We're worth sixty thousand apiece."

Bridget was overjoyed to see Joe alive and hearty, for she had supposed him food for the fishes long since.

Jack and Joe ate supper with Mr. Darcy, and then went to the Santa Catalina Hotel to spend the night.

They spent a week in town, and then took their departure for San Francisco.

They went into the ship chandlery business in that city soon after, and in time picked up a flourishing trade.

At the end of a twelvemonth Joe and Dora were married, and Jack was master of the ceremonies at the wedding.

THE END.

Read A "LIVE" BOY; OR, QUICK TO GET THE DOLLARS (A Story of Wall Street), which will be the next number (252) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

The historic vault under the Capuchin Church in Vienna, which contains the remains of nearly all the members of the imperial family who have died within the last two hundred years, has been enlarged by the inclusion of the monastery's wine cellar. Two new vaults have thus been added. The walls are lined with white-marble. The smaller one now contains the coffins of the nearer relatives of the Emperor. Here also the last resting place of the present Emperor will be.

The popular idea that earthquakes and volcanic explosions played a part in forming the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River is thought by the best authorities to be without foundation. We are now told that the canyon was cut out entirely by the water of the river, and that the most effective tool employed was the quartz sand brought down from the sources of the river in the mountains. This sand is harder than any of the constituents of the rock strata in which the canyon has been carved. Hurlled by the swift water against the sides and the bed of the stream, it cuts the rock as easily as a file cuts soft iron.

Among pioneer inventors to whom the diving dress in its present perfected form owes so much was William Hannis Taylor. The previous hit or miss attempts were superseded by the Taylor patent of June 20, 1838, in which the essential feature was the valve allowing the emission of consumed air without an influx of water. Previous to this time there had been the diving chests and the diving bell, of which the latter, introduced by Smeaton in 1778, was the safest and most practical device for submarine exploration. The diving bell has been developed alongside of the diving dress and is still in use. The general appearance of Taylor's diving armor was like that of a knight's suit of mail, except for a prominent bulge in the body piece. A large pipe coming down from the surface and penetrating the body piece at the bulge supplied the fresh air, while a short pipe entered the body piece on the other side, and was provided with a valve which carried off the exhaust. Although diving armor has now reached its perfected state this valve has never been materially improved upon.

The German Emperor recently presented to the Hohenzollern Museum the "death dice" with which one of his ancestors decided a difficult case in the seventeenth century. The history of these dice is generally given as follows: A young girl had been murdered. Suspicion fell upon two young soldiers,

Ralph and Alfred, who were suitors for her hand. They both denied their guilt, and even torture failed to extract a confession from either. Then Elector Frederick William decided to cut the knot by means of the dice box. The two soldiers should throw for their lives, and the loser should be executed as the murderer. The event was celebrated with great solemnity. Ralph had the first chance and threw sixes, the highest possible number. The dice box was then given to Alfred. He fell on his knees and prayed. Then he rose to his feet and threw the dice with such force that one of them was broken. The whole one showed six, the broken one also gave six on the larger portion, and the fragment split off showed one. This was a total of thirteen, one beyond Ralph's throw. The audience held its breath in amazement. "Heaven has spoken!" cried the prince. Ralph, appalled by what he regarded as a sign from heaven, confessed his guilt and was sentenced to death.

JOKES AND JESTS.

Wife—In a battle of tongues a woman can hold her own.
Husband—M'yes, p'r'aps she can; but she never does.

"Remember, Ethel, you are a little girl, and you shouldn't try to do all the talking." "When will I be old enough to, mamma?"

The Man—No, I don't suppose that I shall ever marry. I'm too shy, don't you know, and "faint heart ne'er won fair lady."
The Girl (helping him on)—But I'm not fair; I'm dark.

Amiable Youth—Let me give you a hand. You'll hurt yourself if you fall. It isn't like ice—there's no give in this floor.
Independent Young Lady—I can supply the give—thanks, very much!

Sister's Young Man (at the celebration of the engagement)—Now, Karl, wouldn't you like to taste some champagne?
Karl—Oh, I know what it's like. This isn't the first time she's got engaged.

A little boy's mother went the other day to a reception, leaving the baby in Jimmy's care. With an injured look Jimmy said on her return: "Mamma, I wish you wouldn't make me mind the baby again. He was so bad that I had to eat two mince pies and half the fruit cake to amuse him."

"It's all very well for you to preach economy," said his wife; "but I notice whenever I cut down expenses that you smoke better cigars and spend more money for your own pleasure than at any other time." "Well, confound it, what do you suppose I want you to economize for, anyway?"

Torke—Your daughter's musical education must have cost a lot of money? De Porke—Yes, it did; but I've got it all back. Torke—Indeed? De Porke—Yes. I'd been trying to buy the house next door for years and they wouldn't sell. But since she's come home they've sold it to me for half price.

Casual Acquaintance—"So you were always opposed to cigars? But one never knows what these husbands do once they are out of your sight. I wouldn't be surprised if your husband was smoking now." Young Woman (in horrified tones)—"Oh, don't suggest such a thing!" Casual Acquaintance—"Why not?" Young Woman—"Because—because—my—my husband's dead!"

THE BROTHERS MACLURE

By Alexander Armstrong.

Five of us there were altogether in that pleasant month's tour in the Hebrides. Five of us, and all University men, except bluff Captain Joliffe. What a jolly sailor he was, to be sure, with his weather-beaten face and those brave blue eyes that his heart looked through, eyes that seemed always twinkling with mirth and good nature. Where in this wide world of ours, I wonder, lay the sea in which he had not sailed, land he had not lived in?

He was uncle to one of our party—little Tom Wright—and seemed like a father to the lot of us. And he it was who had proposed this highly promising expedition.

"We'll get our guns and fishing-tackle and things here in Aberdeen," he had said, "then go right away to Portree in Skye and hire a herring-boat, and I'll sail her for you, lads. Fun? Yes, any amount of it."

So here you find us, sitting after supper around our log fire near the beach. Our tent is pitched close by, and out yonder rides our big boat. The everlasting hills rise over us, the waves are lispings on the sands, and the sea is alive with phosphorescent light, while the stars look so near that we feel as if we could stretch out our hands and catch them. There isn't a sound to break the stillness, except now and then the tu-whit-to-whoo of a great white owl, or, away in the offing yonder, the sullen, booming plash of a whale.

"What am I going to tell you to-night, eh?" said Captain Joliffe, in answer to a query of Gordon's. "Why, lads, I'll need to be a kind of Arabian knight to please you. But never mind. Well, you know, I've been thinking——"

"Thinking what?"

"Thinking that if I were going to write a book for young men or boys there should be some sense in it. I wouldn't send my heroes skipping across the salt seas for no end or purpose, fighting with wild beasts or wild men, without a cause, and merely for skins or scalps. Bother it, no! Let young men, I say, who love adventure unite pleasure with profit, and try to advance themselves in life in an honest way, while they enjoy sport with a spice of danger in it to their heart's content."

"But how?" queried Gordon. "Give us a hint, cap."

"Well, I'll tell about the brothers Maclure. Three of them there were, and they weren't rich, I assure you. The eldest about twenty, the youngest barely seventeen. Heigho! it makes me a young man again when I look back to the dear old days when these boys were children. No matter where I had been, or in what distant lands I might have sojourned, or how long I'd been away I was always at home when I got to Maclure's fireside. Let me recall one scene. It is in one of the long forenights of winter, and we are all seated in a big semi-circle round a cheerful fire that is burning on the low hearth. The fire is peat and wood, so I need hardly tell you that Captain Maclure's house was in the far north of bonnie Scotland. There is no lamp; we don't require it. The flickering blaze is light and warmth too, and we care little for the wind that goes roaring around the chimney in 'howthering' gusts that shakes the doors and rattles the windows. The mother—fragile and fair and English she is—is knitting by the light; the father, a half-pay captain, is telling a story to which the boys and pretty Effie the sister—Effie with eyes of blue and hair like golden sunbeams—are listening.

"He is telling them a wild story of La Plata, where, when a free lance, he had served and fought the Indians on the borders.

"He little knew then what a deep and lasting impression his story was making on the hearts of the lads. By and by I myself tell a story, then Mrs. Maclure sings, and so does Effie. And thus the evening wears away, and the lamp is lit at last, that a chapter from man's great life-guide, the Book of Books, may be read. Then to bed.

"Maclure had retired and taken a small farm—a mere croft—only it was enough to keep his boys busy when not at school, and to teach them the value of activity. So the lads were all as hard and tough as a mainstay.

"But grief came at last, for the father was borne away to his long home in the auld kirkyard. And some time after the boys formed a resolution to go in search of fortunes. They had been left a few pounds each, and they determined to make it more. With the help of Sister Effie and one man servant the little farm would be managed till the boys had settled in the new land.

"And where were they bound to? To Australia or to Canada, think you? No, for the old Scotch blood was playing dance through their veins, and their father's love of adventure was their heirloom.

"They chose a border land, a land hardly yet reclaimed from nature, still overrun with wild beasts and wilder men—the Pampas.

"'We'll pay you for taking us out, Captain Joliffe,' they said to me one day.

"'I won't have a penny,' I answered. 'I'm going that way—I'm going to Buenos Ayres, and never a farthing of your money will I touch, as sure as you all are standing there.'

"'Then,' said the youngest, 'as sure as we all three stand here, we won't go in your ship unless you let us handle the ropes and work our passage out. Brothers, am I right?'

"'Right you are, Willie.'

"So I gave in, for I loved their independence. It spoke well for their future welfare.

"I went with the lads to get their outfit and guns and tools and things, and I'm sure we bought nothing that wasn't useful, and some rare bargains we made, too."

"Buenos Ayres was not then the big town it is now, nor was Rosario very much of a place. But the boys' claim lay far to the west of this, and to the south of Frayle Muerto, 'the town of the dead friar.'

"They were full of life, and as happy as birds in spring, for weren't they like the birds in one way?—they were beginning housekeeping, so there was a real pleasure in roaming about the strange semi-deserted streets of Rosario, finding shops and purchasing household utensils.

"We hired servants, too, and bought an extra dog or two, cross-breds they were, but suited to the country. We had brought from Scotland two beautiful collies and one young gigantic mastiff. The animal stood thirty and two inches at the shoulder, was as gentle as a lamb, but could almost have pulled down a lion when aroused, or in his master's defense."

"Our servants were five in all, and their united wages came to very little; three were natives, or Guachos, the other two, Donald and Ronald, were, like ourselves, wiry, sturdy Scots, but alas! for them, though good for us, they were sadly out of luck, owing to the curse of drink, the seeds of which once sown in the system are so difficult to eradicate.

"Our caravan reached the boys' claim after several adventures on the road, one being caused by a puma springing at the horses. In an instant the dogs were on him, and the scientific way they set about breaking the huge and dangerous brute up, shows how great is the sagacity of man's best friend. They went in at once for the division-of-labor plan of operations, and while Magnus the mastiff went for the throat of the foe, the collies attacked the hind legs, and the Gaucho dogs set about attacking the stomach. A well-aimed shot, however, quieted the puma and saved the blood of our faith-

ful dogs. After this Donald and Ronald rode on ahead, armed, to make sure of our safety.

"We arrived all right after many days of roughish travel, and were a little disappointed at finding the country so flat; but it was fertile. It looked a cattle country—ay, and it looked something else, lads! It looked as if gold was buried there, and only wanted sturdy arms and the plow to get it out."

"Gold!" we exclaimed.

"I think that the brothers Maclure looked somewhat saddened by the sight of the country, and that they turned their eyes wistfully to the far-off sierras. Never mind, they were not disheartened. I lived with them for a month, entirely under canvas, a wild, free life, for to rod and gun we were indebted for nearly all our provisions. Then I went away, and ere long, was once more following my avocations on the salt sea wave.

"Years passed by—one, two, three, four—and I'd never heard from my young friends, and could not tell whether they were dead or alive.

"Once only about the end of the third year, I had gone out to the little Aberdeenshire farm, but found the nest 'forhuit.' Nobody there, the windows boarded up, and weeds growing rank and wild all over the garden. I got no satisfactory information from the neighbors; they could only say that the bad time had come, and Mrs. Maclure and her daughter had gone to the city to live.

"Some months afterward I found myself once more back in Buenos Ayres, where, however, I had been several times since leaving our boys. To my joy, on going into my office one day on shore, I found a letter and a pressing invitation from the young brothers Maclure, to come and see them.

"It was in early summer; it would be four months yet before I could complete my cargo, and as I could trust my mate to do everything, I determined to start off at once and spend all my spare time with the lads I loved so well.

"They met me with a team at Frayle Muerto, the whole three of them. I wouldn't have known them; even the youngest now was a brown-faced, broad-shouldered man, and the oldest, though only twenty-four, had a beard like our friend Gordon Cumming. But when they spoke and laughed—ah! then I could see they were my lads after all.

"The team was a crack one as far as horses went, and Donald, who looked younger, was the driver. My friends were dressed in loose Garibaldi shirts, with knives and revolvers in their belts, and broad straw hats with ostrich feathers. They looked like a trio of romantic brigands.

"Well, boys, I was glad and surprised to see them, but when I came to the land where I had left them under canvas, I had far greater reason to be surprised. Fortune, they say, favors the brave; it had favored these boys and no mistake.

"Why, I said, as I looked abroad and saw smiling fields where erst the woods had waved—the mandubay, the algaroba, the tall and yellow-flowered chanyar, were to a large extent cut down, except round certain fields, which, much to my surprise, were green with rising wheat and maize, and these fields were also surrounded with snake fencing. Beyond were droves of sheep and cattle and horses, pasturing out with Guacho herd-boys and dogs innumerable. The roads were good everywhere, but rough, and the principal and broadest of these conducted us to the house.

"This house was indeed a thing of beauty, and strong enough in appearance to be a joy forever. It was almost entirely surrounded by verandas, and these in beauty could only be compared to gardens in the sky. No words of mine—uncouth old sailor that I am—could convey to you any idea of the gorgeous beauty of the trailing, climbing flowers and plants.

"I had to turn round and shake hands once more with my young friends, just to relieve my feelings.

"'Dear lads,' I exclaimed; 'you must be already wealthy!'

"'Not so,' said Jack, the eldest, 'we are only just getting our heads above water. We've had to work like New Hollanders, and make bricks without straw, so to speak, and fight only too often.'

"'Fight?' I said.

"'Yes. The Indians—thieving scoundrels—sweep down on us every now and then, but we have many servants now, besides Donald and Ronald, and they are mostly faithful.'

"'And your mother and sister?'

"Jack's eyes shone with a gladder light now.

"'Yes,' he said, 'they have been roughing it at home, the dear old mum and Effie, but it is over, and they'll be out here before you go.'

"Well, lads, I settled down now seriously to enjoy my summer in the Pampas. Meanwhile the lads, at every spare moment, were devouring the newspapers I had brought from Buenos Ayres and from England with me.

"But the more I walked about over the beautiful farm and clearing, and the more I saw, the more I admired the pluck and endurance of my boys, as I called them, in turning part of a wilderness into a smiling and fertile estate—literally hewing for themselves a fortune with hatchet and pickaxe. The men labor away, and sing as they work; Donald, the reformed Scot, is seeing after this department, while Ronald is superintending the digging of a great well, for the boys have set their minds on having pure spring water.

"Then there are busy men in the stables and busy men in the gardens. We see a mill also, and I find the boys grind their own flour and make their own bread, as of course they are bound to do.

"After I had been about three months in the Pampas, the boys proposed a week's hunting in the plains and hill-lands, and I was delighted.

"Three days brought us to the hunting-grounds, and sport began in earnest. We chased and lassoed wild horses from the herd. We brought down the rhea, or ostrich, and the llama, on the plains. We had days of duck-shooting, and more than one adventure with jaguars and wolves, but saw no pumas.

"But our enjoyment came to a sudden and disagreeable end, for one bright moonlight night the Indians attacked us in force.

"It was a rout, and a fatal one to many of our poor fellows who fell into the hands of these savages. Early in the morning of the second night we were back once more at the gates of the estancia. We rattled over the bridge, for we were hard pressed; it was indeed but touch-and-go.

"And here a deed was done that puts me in mind of the days of old Rome; for the eldest brother, sword and revolver in hand, positively stood single-handed, and kept those Indians at bay till the drawbridge was raised. Had he not done so, every soul in the camp would have been massacred.

"But see, the bridge is up, the estancia is safe! And now brave young Jack, with one wild slogan shout of 'Scotland forever!' dashes his revolver at the head of the foremost Indian, plunges into the moat, and next moment is safely across and over the ramparts all unscathed.

"Just three weeks after this warlike episode, the mother and Effie arrived at Rosario, and we all went to meet them.

"Straight out from Britain, straight from the grinding poverty of city life at home, it was no wonder that Effie and her mother were delighted with the freshness and beauty of everything they saw around them.

"Yes, that was a happy time—a happy summer to me."

"And whatever became of Effie?" asked Gordon.

"Effie, my boy," replied the jolly Captain Jolliffe laughing, "why, Effie is my wife."

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